

DUKE UNIVERSITY  
Durham, North Carolina

# **The Plastic Face: Nation-Branding and Personal Branding in 21<sup>st</sup> Century South Korea**

Ieshia Smith

April 2014

Under the supervision of Professor Cheehyung Kim, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for Graduation with Distinction

Program in International Comparative Studies  
Trinity College of Arts and Sciences

## Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Illustrations .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One – Nation-Building, Nation-Branding: The (In)Visible Woman .....</b>	<b>13</b>
The Need for a Modernized South Korea .....	13
The Uneven Mobility of Women.....	18
The Reality of the Glass Ceiling.....	22
Double-Edged Sword – Gendered Nation-Branding.....	26
Conclusion.....	34
<b>Chapter Two - Unmasking the Face: History and Ideal of Facial Transformation in South Korea.....</b>	<b>35</b>
Bridging the Gap between Nation-Branding and Personal Branding.....	35
Branding the Face for Success.....	37
An Attractive Face in the Labor and Social Markets.....	40
Reading the Contours of the Face through Physiognomy .....	42
“Modern” Physiognomy - Positive Value Association and Physical Appearance.....	46
The Misclassified “Westernization” of the Korean Face .....	48
Media and the Promotion of the “Ideal Face” .....	51
Conclusion.....	56
<b>Chapter Three - Desirability and Marketability of the (Un)Altered Body .....</b>	<b>58</b>
The Transformation of the Global Reconstructive Medical Field .....	58
Reconstructive and Plastic Surgery Arrive In South Korea.....	62
Marketing Plastic Surgery – An Internet Case Study.....	64
Mission Statements and Marketing of Surgical Procedures.....	65
Before and After Testimonials .....	69
Conclusion.....	73
<b>Conclusion – The Future of Korea’s Plastic Surgery Industry .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>80</b>

## Abstract

This thesis explores the popularization of South Korea's plastic surgery industry and the implication of an attractive facial appearance in work and social circles. In problematizing journalism that explains Korean plastic surgery as mimicry of the West, an alternative narrative is constructed to historicize the valuation of the face and rationalize Korea's 21<sup>st</sup> century emphasis on physical attractiveness. Rapid economic, political, and social changes since the birth of the Korean nation in 1948 inform the current *beauty ideal*. Historically, the *Korean face* has represented political resistance during Japanese colonialism (1910-1945), national resilience after Korean war-induced destruction (1950-1953), and the arrival to modernity at the peak of economic developmental efforts (1963-1987). Compressed modernization campaigns beginning in the 1960s provided the necessary foundation for self-improvement discourse, and the 1990s technological boom aided in the socialization of appearance models. Traditional physiognomic philosophy and the positive value association of beauty explain the importance of the face over other body parts, and advertisements disseminated by plastic surgery hospitals drive the consumer base for surgical procedures. Korean women, made to feel incomplete and inharmonious, actively undergo plastic surgery to better their financial and relational circles in a continually advancing capitalist society. In a parallel to nation-branding efforts that rejuvenated the landscape of the Korean nation, Korean women use plastic surgery as a means to reconstruct the self to establish a new, improved image.

## **Acknowledgments**

To my parents, Paul and Lecia Smith – Thank you for encouraging me to pursue my passions and for accepting the assorted paths I have chosen in life. I am forever grateful that God has blessed me with such wonderful individuals, and I hope that I will continue to make you both proud in the future. I love you, Mom and Dad.

To Cheri Ross – I could not have asked for a more inspiring and devoted supervisor to navigate me through the thesis process. I truly admire the care with which you handled each draft I turned in over these past semesters. You challenged me to dig deeper in order to realize my full potential, and for that, I am so grateful.

To Cheehyung Kim – Since I pitched my original thesis idea to you in 2013, you have been on my team every step of the way. You always approached my work with respect and a necessary critical eye. You encouraged me to step outside the box to let my ideas flourish, and I am thankful for all your help. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

To the FLAS Fellowship – Thank you for providing me with the means to travel to South Korea and study Korean language at Sogang University. Without the generosity of the Fellowship, I never would have met the muse that inspired my interest in the plastic surgery industry.

## Illustrations

### Figures

1. Photo collage of Miss Korea 2013 contestants	3
2. Seoul residents sort through rubble of fallen buildings, November 1950	14
3. Illustration, article on glass ceiling for Korean women in corporations	25
4. World leaders in attendance at the 2010 G20 Seoul Summit	28
5. Yu Gwan Sun Statue in Cheonan	30
6. Video advertisement promoting Korean plastic surgery industry	66
7. Proposed surgical procedures	68
8. Ja Kyung's post-surgery transformation	70
9. Pre- and post-surgical photos of Korean man	77

### Table

1. Global gender gap findings in Korea	20
----------------------------------------	----



## Introduction

### *The Curious Case of the Gauze-Covered Woman*

Thanks to the generosity of the FLAS Fellowship, I attended Sogang University's Korean Language Education Center during the summer of 2012. After one class, my friend from Seoul National University surprised me as I prepared to leave campus. It took us about one minute to decide to take a day trip to Garosu-gil, a trendy area in Sinsadong. We picked up a couple of ice cream-filled waffles at my favorite local restaurant near campus and headed to the nearby subway station to begin our adventure. Eventually, we arrived at Garosu-gil and spent our time people-watching at Coffee Smith, window-shopping at eclectic boutiques, and complaining about the hot and humid weather. On the subway ride back to my homestay, I noticed a woman sitting on a corner seat, fiddling with her iPhone. Otherwise, this event would have seemed unremarkable—but white gauze completely obscured the skin on her face and sunglasses shielded her eyes. Thinking back to earlier in the day, I remembered seeing similarly gauze-covered women walk out of multistory complexes around Sinsadong. It dawned on me: these women must have recently undergone plastic surgery. As I had been in South Korea for a few weeks, I had grown accustomed to the cosmetic and plastic surgery advertising in subway stations, on buses and on television. For plastic surgery ads in particular, most often the company juxtaposed *before* and *after* photos of patients, along with a catchphrase inviting consumers to try their company. As I continued my journey home, I realized that the *during* phase—absent in advertising—was sitting on the corner seat of the train car. My interest in plastic surgery began with this impersonal encounter with the gauze-covered woman.

Since that short, yet non-fleeting, moment during the summer of 2012, I questioned the popularity of plastic surgery in Korea and its implications for identity and life opportunity. The gauze-covered woman's presence in public spoke to a degree of nonchalance with which Koreans appeared to regard plastic surgery; I hypothesized that openness about "going under the knife" was not, however, a feature of the past as it is today. My preliminary Google searches on Korean plastic surgery led to rather striking headlines that positioned Korea as the "plastic surgery capital of the world" and enticed the searcher to peruse galleries featuring "startling" before and after photos of plastic surgery patients. It soon became clear that top Western English-language news and social sites portrayed Korean plastic surgery as an abnormal, alien phenomenon. Within the comment sections of nearly every web article, I found commentators berating those who went under the knife for denying their race, trying to look more white, or engaging in reprehensible activity. Given my relative familiarity with the seemingly casual perception of plastic surgery within Korea, I found it curious that Korean plastic surgery was apparently widely vilified by Westerners. The more sensationalized stories that focused on "extreme" plastic surgery did so in a manner that scrutinized the practice of plastic surgery without alluding to any historical or cultural factors that would indicate an increased propensity for physical alteration in this particular society.





Figure 1. Photo collage of Miss Korea 2013 contestants. *Source:* Zimmerman 2013.

In April 2013, a photo collage of eighteen of the Miss Korea 2013 pageant contestants circulated around the Internet like wildfire (see Figure 1). Popular social news sites such as Gawker, Reddit, Huffington Post, Daily Mail, and BuzzFeed analyzed the photo through a series of pointed descriptions. According to these websites, “clone parade,” “pervasive culture of conformity,” “Twilight Zone,” and “brainwashed” best described the faces of the crown hopefuls, while “plastic surgery” and “Photoshop” remained at the heart of debate surrounding the “eerily similar” women. In addition to the more specific terms applied to the photograph, the authors and commentators went on to explain Korea’s status as the number one per capita consumer of plastic surgery in the world and the widespread prevalence of surgical and cosmetic “whitening.”

By pointing out incidences of “sameness” in such ways, social media journalists make the *Korean face* simultaneously an object of fascination and strangeness. Born out of a groupthink mentality exacerbated by easy forwarding and meme culture on the web, such standout moments flatten the cultural scene of 21st century Korea and relegate a complex

and multifaceted history into compact, shocking grids. The unproductive discussion surrounding images like the Miss Korea photo collage, among other issues, neglects to challenge the propagation of these images as inauthentic representations of Korea's plastic surgery scene. Rather than attempting to question the myths of plastic surgery, journalistic outlets and blogs fuel the flames of misinformation and willful ignorance.

### *Literature Review*

In an attempt to cut through such crude layers of information on Korean plastic surgery, I turned to the scholarly community to view the surgical industry through an academic lens. The scholarship is strongly divided. In one camp rests the systemic argument which views plastic surgery as the result of media indoctrination within a global capitalist environment. Kim (2003) positions the physical body as an *emblem of capitalism* and views consumerism as the ultimate driving force behind plastic surgery. Korea, operating squarely within an international framework, had to literally reinvent itself and its citizens to survive against the pre-existing giant capitalist states. Riggs (2012) expands upon Kim's (2003) theories by ascribing the characteristics of "novel powers and state freedoms" to the physical body. Thus, individual Koreans actively play the part of modern citizens by refashioning their bodies to reflect cosmopolitan qualities. This role that Koreans perform hinges upon making the self attractive, pleasing, and inviting, all of which require someone or something to create desire for evolving standards of attractiveness and beauty. Kim (2010) and Davies and Han (2011) consider the media the principle agent in setting and enforcing the new Korean "ideal beauty." For Kim (2010), the media bombards the consumer with images of beauty and plants the seeds of desire for physical change.

According to her research, the consumer undergoes a negotiation with herself and against others before ultimately deciding to take the surgical plunge. Davies and Han (2011) reject the Western mimicry hypothesis and argue that “ideal beauty” reflects a non-culturally specific, universal “consumer ideal of beauty.” Aston, Steinbrecht and Walden (2012) also take issue with the popular belief that Korean plastic surgery is an attempt to westernize the body. Rather, the authors claim that enhancement via surgery can impact one’s life prospects through subtle, natural-seeming improvements.

The second scholarly camp in the plastic surgery debate positions individuals as having the autonomy to create an identity less controlled by patriarchal organizations and more open to personal interpretation. Haiken (1997, 2000) argues plastic surgery allows one to develop an authentic identity. Surgery bridges the gap between how one feels and looks in order to create a more mentally and physically complete person. She attributes the evolution of the medical field as a pivotal factor in how we understand ourselves and hails modern medicine as the mechanism to repair disjunctions within the self. Suissa (2008) claims a “societal marketplace,” rather than mass media, sets the standards for appearance across time and space. Instead of viewing plastic surgery as a capitalistic market phenomenon, he argues the public themselves play an active part in determining what is and is not attractive. Karupiah (2012) rounds out the “surgery as an assertion of agency” camp by viewing plastic surgery as a means to empower oneself and inspire self-confidence. While Karupiah takes a comparatively less liberal stance than Haiken and Suissa, she believes that women in particular do not merely chase the coattails of plastic surgery consumer indoctrination. For women willing to actively seek out surgery in order to “get what they want” in life, their decision to go under the knife is less influenced by

shifts in public perception of appearance and more formulated by personal outlook on their socioeconomic prospects.

This overview of the main literature about plastic surgery within Korea suggests that the *Miss Korea* example and similar articles fail to consider theorization and contextualization of such phenomena. My frustration regarding misconceptions about the Korean plastic surgery industry faded as I considered the scholarly literature's emphasis on identity formation in the face of modernization and globalization, and on notions of ideal beauty formed through such influences as consumer capitalism. I also started to imagine lived scenarios that might cause one to undergo plastic surgery. More than a manifestation of media-propelled consumerism or an assertion of one's personhood through physical reconstruction, plastic surgery might be contextualized within modern Korea's short, approximately seventy-year history. The existing scholarship on Korea's plastic surgery boom neither sufficiently grounds the phenomenon within a historical framework nor tracks the development of one particular group of Koreans across time. Instead, the plastic surgery literature largely focuses on Korean women and how plastic surgery has or has not become an oppressive tool of the patriarchy.

Adding a new voice to the existing scholarship on plastic surgery and physical aesthetics in Korea, I focus on women who undergo plastic surgery for economically and socially motivated reasons. Based on an examination of Korea's post-Korean War status to the current (2014) Korean society, I find that staying ahead of the competition plays a decisive role in whether one goes under the knife. Increased job market competition beginning in the late 1970s led to a new standard of success, one that did not solely rest on one's skill set or network connections. Appearance, especially one's *face*, arose as a quasi-

passport to higher economic and social circles: an attractive appearance provided one with a smoother journey to an improved social status. The concept of *maintaining face* literally and figuratively applied not only to individuals but to the Korean nation as a whole. Korea, a nation born out of war and colonization, rebuilt itself from the ground up to become a beacon of technological innovation and enticing culture. The landscapes of major Korean cities, including Seoul, Busan, and Daegu, transformed into budding urban metropolises boasting a new professional, financially capable workforce. Along with Korea's structural and interpersonal improvements from the late 1950s onwards, the citizenry had greater access to global cosmopolitan networks and improved local health coverage. With the revitalization of the medical landscape and the incorporation of philosophies on physical appearance came the popularization of plastic surgery.

The goal of my thesis is not to discredit the *systemic* and the *agency* camps in the scholarship surrounding Korean plastic surgery. Rather, my analysis draws from both sides to present a critical and experiential view of plastic surgery as a means to identify oneself as a successful and competitive person, both within and outside of the job market. Moving forward in my work, I argue that nation branding, born out of Korea's modernization process, led to the rise of personal branding through physical reconstruction. I adopt a historically and culturally sensitive approach to support my claim that Korean women receive plastic surgery to rebrand themselves in hopes of improving their life opportunities. This is not to suggest that all Korean women go under the knife for this reason; I recognize the popularity of cosmetic plastic surgery simply to look more "attractive," as well as reconstructive plastic surgery to correct congenital defects. However, I am more interested in the pervasive marketing tactics and promises behind the

plastic surgery engine that positions plastic surgery as a tool by which one may achieve success and improve relationships—both professional and personal.

It is worth noting that this thesis, quite deliberately, does not address the phenomenon of men who elect to go under the knife—also a widespread occurrence in Korea. I find the historical narrative regarding Korea has not developed the woman's voice until her active engagement in the economic and political realms as part of Korea's post-War modernizing efforts. Korea, a nation with a rich tradition of Confucianism, historically assigned women to the domestic sphere while men operated outside of the home. Thus, women had to break into the public sphere in the modern era whereas men already enjoyed deeply rooted networks. As Korean women gained an identity unlinked from the home, they had to find ways to navigate their predominately male-dominated society. As controversial as such a claim may seem, an attractive appearance allowed for easier access to new opportunities previously unavailable for women.

### *Methodology*

In order to examine the branding of physical appearance in the Korean market, my research consists of qualitative data collected from the websites of seven Korean plastic surgery hospitals and one Korean medical tourism agency. Depending on the site's composition, I analyzed *before and after* and testimonial sections to understand which surgeries are most popular and how these surgeries are branded. My data includes written testimonials, pictorial evidence, and YouTube videos created by the hospitals. Although the analyzed data does not specify patient age, I estimate the majority of patients range from early to late 20s, a range corresponding to recent college graduates to young professionals.

The selected websites represent several of the top international-friendly plastic surgery hospitals in Korea, so most provided language services in English, Russian, Thai, Chinese, and Japanese, in addition to Korean. For ease of accessibility, all sources were analyzed in English. I recognize that English-translated websites may provide a different picture of the branding of plastic surgery and patients' thoughts post-surgery. A Korean-only website could yield rich data that might add some further complexities to my analysis, for example regarding the socio-economic class and level of education of plastic surgery consumers.

To contextual the findings of my primary data, I draw upon the work of scholars and apply relevant theoretical principles while embedding insights drawn from these sources in the history of Korea from the 1950s onwards. To preview the argument made from my primary sources: physiognomic thought and the theory of positive value association play the most significant roles in my data analysis, closely followed by the notion of *the cosmetic gaze*. Through the interplay of primary and secondary data, I rationalize the marketing of plastic surgery as the natural extension of Korea's self-improvement philosophy born out of modernization campaigns.

### *Thesis Overview*

Chapter One explains the entrance of women into the labor market as a byproduct of nation-branding under compressed modernization. Initially, I focus on Korea's remarkable economic strides after extreme post-Korean War economic ruin. In order to reconstruct Korea's infrastructure and save the nation from internal collapse, the Korean government implemented pervasive measures aimed at establishing professional industries and

mobilizing all able-bodied Koreans in the job market. Second, I provide a picture of the triumphs and struggles women faced as they undertook a formalized labor role for the first time in Korea's history. From the 1960s onwards, Korean women encountered difficulties breaking into the corporate world based on pre-established gender hierarchies and male-centric social networks. Women remained cognizant of Korea's well-rooted Old Boy network and steeled themselves to fight their way into respectable positions. A return to the idea of compressed modernization grounds an analysis of the gendered discourse surrounding nationalism and globalization. The chapter concludes by arguing that the state simultaneously subjugated and elevated women in order to promote a successful national brand image.

Chapter Two explores the methods through which one develops her personal brand via physical means. I analyze selected theories from ancient civilization to modernity to delineate what constitutes attractiveness across time and space and uncover a strong correlation between an attractive appearance and the association of positive values. In a practical sense, I discuss how an attractive face correlates to increased economic yields, yet an overly attractive face conversely affects one's promotional potential. Overall, Korean women appear aware of the immediate benefits of attractiveness in job and social markets, yet do not necessarily consider either the short-term pain of surgical procedures or their long term benefits or detriments. I attribute the lack of interest regarding near or far future outcomes to the ways in which marketing campaigns solely focus on immediate gratification rather than sustained satisfaction. In a more general context, I find the formulation of the Korean "ideal beauty" arose out of a combination of historical values, colonial influences, modernization efforts, and globalization. I argue mass media and



Internet culture (e.g. socialization agents) have played the greatest role in setting an unattainable appearance standard that drives the consumer to undergo plastic surgery. Pliable consumers internalize the messages propagated by socialization agents and find areas within themselves to improve, or rather, rebrand. Due to increasing competition in the workforce and social markets, one's new *face* often projects a successful, positive image that aligns with the goals of nation branding.

Chapter Three focuses on the marketability of an attractive face from the perspective of the historical reconstructive medical field and current practicing plastic surgeons. Beginning from European Enlightenment-era discourse, I track the transition from reconstructive surgery to plastic surgery. After contextualizing the surgical evolution on a global scale, I explain how Korea's 1950s reconstructive surgery field transformed into the multi-billion dollar landscape of today. I consider the 1970s insurance reform as the catalyst that spawned the 1990s rise of private surgical practices. From here, celebrity culture and greater economic mobility contributed to the early 2000s surgical boom, which is still going strong. I conclude with an analysis of several plastic surgery websites to investigate the marketing of aesthetic surgery in Korea. I find that advertising found on clinical websites corresponds to traditional physiognomic ideas and positive value associations about attractive physical appearance.

My conclusion challenges the prevalence of plastic surgery in Korean society and questions the sustainability of the current model where children as young as middle-school age go under the knife. In recognizing the benefits of a fluid, malleable identity, I assert that the appearance generated via the surgical cut retains its value when the market demonstrates a high demand for the "product" such that only comparative social elites can

afford such surgical interventions. Based on the comparatively high rate of plastic surgery in Korea, I caution that desire for the surgical knife may dull if too many consumers are able to attain attractiveness. I then briefly touch upon the popularity of male plastic surgery and its unique implications for gender-based behavior in Korean society. The types of plastic surgery common in men's circles reveal an interesting trend towards a culturally specific constitution of physical attractiveness. Finally, I map out the future direction of my research as it pertains to the function of physical appearance within Korean multinational corporations.

## **Chapter One – Nation-Building, Nation-Branding: The (In)Visible Woman**

### *The Need for a Modernized South Korea*

Japanese colonial occupation of the Korea peninsula (1910 to 1945) ended with Japan's surrender to Allied forces at the conclusion of World War II. In the aftermath of Japan's withdrawal from the Korean peninsula, United States' forces divided the northern half of the peninsula from the southern half, effectively creating the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). While North Korea and South Korea did not formally exist as separate entities until recognition by the United Nations on August 15, 1948, both halves of the peninsula similarly suffered from "extreme economic disorganization and stagnation caused by the sudden separation of the Korean economy from the Japanese economic bloc, and by the partition of the country along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel" (Frank, Kim, and Westphal 1975, 6). Prior to Japan's exit and the North-South division, Japanese personnel operated up to 94% of businesses in Korea and provided 80% of technical manpower to the peninsula's manufacturing industries (6). As part of Japan's colonial strategy, Korean presence in technical and professional industries remained marginal as Japanese workers controlled most of the skilled market share.

In addition to minimal opportunities for Korean advancement within the economy, the availability of resources remained contingent on where one lived within the peninsula. The north boasted a comparatively smaller population (7.9 million inhabitants) and controlled electrical, metal, and chemical resources, whereas the more populated south (15.6 million inhabitants) controlled textiles, food production, and light industry such as printing. After the de facto divide of the north from the south in 1945, manufacturing

output across the peninsula sharply declined, hyperinflation stifled growth, and food shortages presented difficult challenges for the emerging Korean nations. Imports and exports to the Korean peninsula also stagnated, and economic growth was estimated as 33% less than that of 1940 levels (9). To make matters worse, the Korean War, the 1950 to 1953 conflict between the Soviet Union and Chinese-backed North Korea and the United States-backed South Korea, caused significant damages to the infrastructure of the two infant nations. In the case of South Korea, the “destruction of industrial offices, plant and equipment [sic], public facilities, private dwellings and transport equipment (exclusive of military installations) ... [totaled] approximately \$3.0 billion,” while an estimated one million South Koreans perished (11). Overall, South Korea (hereafter Korea) found itself economically exhausted, as it contended with ravaged land, a lack of basic survival necessities, and an emotionally and physically devastated population (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Seoul residents sort through the rubble of fallen buildings in November 1950.  
*Source:* Photograph by Captain F.L. Scheiber, U.S. Army.

Immediate post-Korean War reconstruction efforts from 1953 to 1957 helped the Korean GNP to grow at an impressive rate of 5% per year. Largely due to substantial foreign aid assistance offered by the United Nations and the United States (\$120 million and \$1.7 billion, respectively), the importation of food and raw materials allowed for population, manufacturing, and capital growth (12). However, along Korea's path to recovery came the downside of inflation and uneven growth across industries, a problem that similarly plagued Korea after its independence from the Japanese empire. The foreign assistance programs that allowed Korea to regain its footing after its economic ruin ironically contributed to a new economic downward spiral from 1958 to 1960: a period that featured 40% inflation rates, a negligible goods and service export industry, and an extremely poor GDP.

Not only did Korea suffer from economic difficulties, political strife plagued the landscape of the new nation as Koreans grew discontent with their financial and social situation. Anger at an unresponsive and corrupt government culminated in the overthrow of Korea's first president, Syngman Rhee (1948 to 1960). Rhee's replacement, Yun Bo-seon (1960 to 1961), also suffered the same fate as his predecessor as a military coup forcibly removed Yun from office in 1961. After these rapid changes in government leadership, Park Chung-hee, spearhead of the military coup behind Yun's removal, assumed power in 1961 and placed Korea under military rule until his formal election to the presidency in 1963. With Park's power officially cemented, his administration quickly motioned to address the problems that attributed to Korea's dire economic situation, such as mismanaged funds, monopolistic landownership, the lack of a professional working class, and unrefined industries and infrastructure. Through a proposed five year economic plan, Park's

authoritarian government started to plant the seeds that would eventually catapult Korea to the fifteenth spot on the OECD index and earn its nickname of the “dragon of East Asia” (Cho and Koo 1983; OECD 2013).

Scholars of South Korean political and economic history often characterize the rapid economic development period from the 1960s to 1980s as *compressed modernization* (Cho 2010; Cho and Koo 1983; Abelmann 1997; Kim 2010). According to Chang (2010), compressed modernity involves the abridged interaction of time and space along four dimensions: physical time, historical time, physical space, and cultural space. More specifically:

Compression is the phenomenon whereby diverse components of multiple civilizations which have existed in different areas and/or places coexist in certain delimited time-space and influence and change each other. The phenomena generated in these four dimensions, in turn, interact with each other in complicated ways and further generate new social phenomena. (Chang, 2010: 6)

In a state of compressed modernity, historical and cultural values undergo rapid negotiation with emerging viewpoints typically rooted in capitalist theory. A unique relationship develops between the nation-state, its citizens, and its economy where tradition becomes the antithesis of progress and the government subverts history in the interest of development. While that which is labeled as traditional does not completely succumb to that which is considered modern, previous societal order transforms into a uniquely hybridized form of indigeneity and cosmopolitanism.

The literature on economic development suggests a variety of factors allowed for the successful rise of South Korea’s export-oriented, labor-intensive brand of capitalism. According to Cho (2010):

Simply put, conditions were favorable for rapid economic development in South Korea because of the fluidity of world capital in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the cold war political situation in which the US was actively supporting capitalist economies, and South Korea's ability to follow the Japanese model of export-led industrialization. (50)

In addition to the favorable world conditions that aided Korea's economic development, the Korean government successfully mass mobilized its population along the lines of *kajok* (family) and *kungmin* (citizen). Invoking nationalistic and paternalistic rhetoric, Korea's modernization project established a parallel relationship between the individual and collective consciousness. Economic development became a means to involve each able-bodied citizen in the plan to achieve positive internal and external results. The image of the self-sacrificing and driven worker became the ideal description of the newly reformed labor market. Motivated by this forward-thinking ideology, women, particularly young single women, entered the work force as cheap and unskilled, yet highly motivated laborers (Kim 2010; Cho 2010; Cho and Koo 1983).

Cho (2010) pinpoints one of the paradoxical juxtapositions of Korea's era of compressed modernization: the state developed a *hypermasculine* culture even as women entered the public realm for the first time. Though women now were formally recognized as participants in the economy, their participation was symbolically coded through a deeply gendered patriarchy. "The authoritarian Korean state ... fully reconstructed and incorporated the characteristics of Confucian parental governance into the modernizing project by defining the nation and the public sector as masculine and excluding women from politics" (Cho 2010, 53). Men easily found work in the urban job market, whereas women were still expected to attend to household and private affairs. For women who branched away from the domestic sector, the available work remained restricted to rural,

grunt work labor: a stark contrast to the esteemed nature of men's work. Serving as a leftover remnant of Confucian ideology and state-sponsored gender segregation, women existed on the lowest rung of the socio-political ladder, subordinated in the economic realm.

### *The Uneven Mobility of Women*

In the years prior to the conclusion of the Korean War in 1953, the work of Korean women was not ascribed quantifiable value, as the state often did not measure a woman's economic contribution to the household or to the economy more generally. However, with the onset of modern capitalist practices, government agencies and interested third-party organizations began to track occupational habits and opportunities available for Koreans. Common breakdowns of Korean industry classify predominant occupations into three general categories: primary (agriculture, forestry, and fishing), secondary (mining and manufacturing), and tertiary (social overhead capital and other services). From the 1960s to 1980s, the industrial labor force jumped from 5% to 23%, while the service industry increased from 15% to 43% (Cho and Koo 1983, 519). Thanks to the rapidly expanding secondary and tertiary sectors, this two-decade period saw a "dramatic increase of factory work in the city in which predominately young single women were employed, intensified agricultural work among rural women, and a noticeable increase in white-collar jobs for a small population of women" (Cho and Koo 1983, 521-522).

During the mid 1960s to 1980s phase of Korea's economic development, a woman's marital status and physical location greatly impacted her mobility within the job market. Generally, an unmarried woman in an urban setting had a greater chance at finding and retaining work than her married, rural counterpart. Women largely found clerical, retail,



and service work, and 91.3% of women aged 15 to 24 were wage earners in 1992. The most desired occupations for women, as indicated by Kim's (1993) survey participants, were professional jobs, since they provided greater job security than the manufacturing and service sector. For unmarried women, 12.5% participated in finance, insurance, real estate, or business, and 18.8% in other professional jobs. General trends indicated a decreasing involvement of women in rural occupations, as women more readily found work as teachers, nurses, clerks, retailers, and servers.

The entrance of women into the formal working environment was by no means a smooth transition, as women openly faced discrimination in the male-dominated arena:

The female labor market participation rate and employment-population ratio of Korea are among the lowest when compared with other OECD member countries. The wage disparity of men and women workers in Korea is the largest amongst OECD member countries. Various human resource indices including the level of higher education tend to show that women in Korea have surpassed women from many developed nations. (Jin 2013, 41)

The 2012 global gender gap report released by the World Economic Forum ranked Korea 103 out of 135 in terms of gender equality, echoing the findings of the OECD report (see Table 1). Though Korean women are the world's most literate group, they face remarkably unequal odds in the economic participation and opportunity subcategory. With limited representation in the government, income 40% less than that of men, and less opportunity for promotion to a senior position, women encounter discrimination before and after entrance into the labor market.

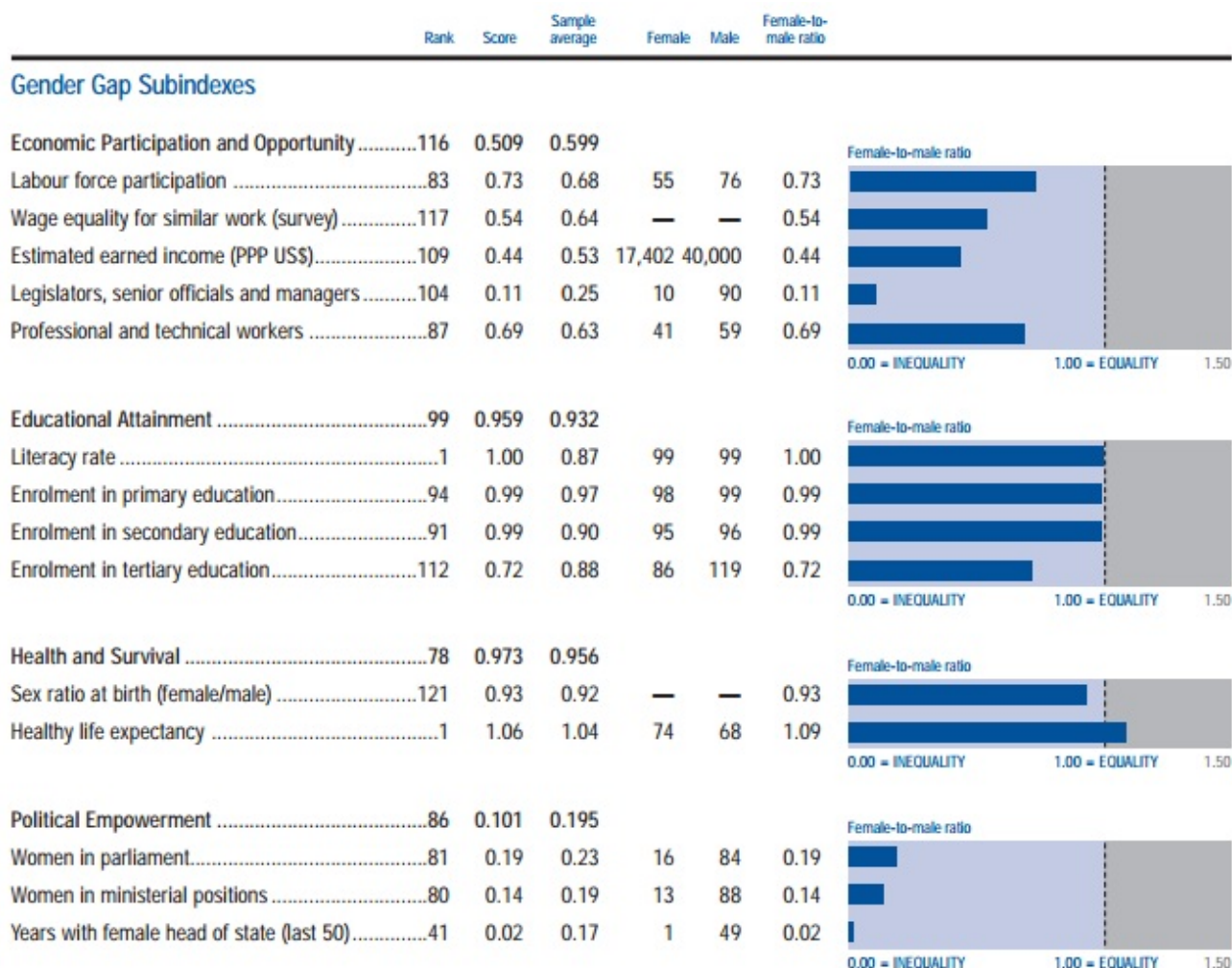


Table 1. Global gender gap findings in Korea. *Source:* Data from World Economic Forum 2012.

Formally, Korea has taken steps to improve gender equality through the creation of targeted legislation and new government agencies. The Women's Development Act of 1995, the Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act of 1999, the Assistance for Women's Enterprises Act of 1999, and the revised Equal Employment Act of 1999 all sought to support women's welfare and prohibit gender discrimination and sexual harassment (Tuten and August 1999, 112-113). In addition to the increased legislation promoting women's political and economic rights, in 1998, President Kim Dae Jung created the

Presidential Commission for Women's Affairs in order to boost women's involvement in the country's political processes, and in 2000, the Ministry of Gender Equity & Family was founded to "eliminate any forms of discrimination and violence against women" (WRP 2001, n.p.).

Even with the Korean government's efforts to foster gender equality, many markers of a gender gap remain as recently as 2013. 63.8% of women still cited sex discrimination at work despite laws such as Affirmation Action and the Equal Employment Law that prohibit gender discrimination during the hiring and recruitment process (Patterson and Bae 2013, 101). When compared to men, women primarily suffered from disproportionate earnings, lack of job security, and lower availability of full-time work. From 1980 to 1988, a report issued by the International Labor Organization revealed that Korea had the "highest wage differential" between men and women out of twenty-two countries (Kim and Park 2006, 448). An updated survey in 2003 found the average woman's income was still only 64.2% of the average man's income. In addition to their systematic lower earning potential, Korean women also have landed on the employment chopping block more often than men. In the aftermath of the financial crisis of 1997, women were laid off from their jobs at an alarmingly high rate as compared to men. "Firms openly targeted women for massive layoffs [...] because men were the main family breadwinners but also reflecting a Confucian patriarchal ideology that relegates women to an insignificant status in the world of work" (Kim and Park 2006, 446). Companies classified women as "non-essential" workers, instead choosing to retain men while the country reeled from the stock market crash. Even after Korea's remarkable recovery from its economic fall from grace, women wishing to enter the job market did so at a rate of 20%, despite being equally qualified with their male

counterparts (Kim and Park 2006). Women often found themselves placed in nonstandard employment and thus ineligible for retirement, overtime, bonus pay, and insurance. Approximately 60 to 70% of women landed irregular, part-time employment yet lacked the salary and benefits that full-time labor afforded. Although women had increased opportunities in white collar and professional fields and were strongly visible in the service industry, the status of the woman worker remained and continues to remain subject to pre-existing gendered conceptions of labor.

### *The Reality of the Glass Ceiling*

Immediately prior to Korea's economic development, women were able to achieve upward mobility through marriage. Relating back to Confucian ideology, visually appealing women could marry "up" into a higher class, solely by virtue of good looks and breeding. Even with the onset of modernization and women's entrance into the labor force, women still faced a class-based hurdle. "The options of middle-class women in their economic activities (in the professional field or in lucrative informal economies) are greater than those of working-class women [...] because of their better educational qualifications and greater family resources" (Abelmann 1997, 530). Ironically, though the number with college degrees increased from 25.3% to 77.5% of women from 1970 to 2003, their educational rise did not correlate to increased job prospects and labor security:

With the rapid expansion of education into the 1970s and through the 1980s and 1990s, the value of a college education declined, guaranteeing neither employment nor a middle class life [...] frustrating the middle class, which is better educated than – but deprived relative to – the capitalist class. (Abelmann 1997, 406)

Middle class, educated women had the credentials and status suitable for corporate employment, yet work simply evaded their reach. In a 2009 survey of undergraduate students, 94% of women felt they had more difficulties than men when seeking employment (Lee and Cheon 2009, n.p.). Women recognize the inequality of opportunity, yet have little agency to better their circumstances. “Korea’s female labor force has grown, but its actual female working population has not because employment is more difficult for women due to the gender division of jobs and failure to employ highly educated women” (Patterson and Bae 2013, 95). To understand why women are not achieving a strong showing of success in the corporate world requires an exploration of the general corporate structure in Korea.

The process for entering into the corporate world often occurs in two steps: recruitment and selection. Personal and professional networks play a major role in what type of work one can secure. Chang (2003) outlines several resources that prospective employees often use during their job search: “formal channels, informal or personal contacts, unsolicited direct applications [and] semi-formal social networks between schools and employers” (33). Employers tend to value and trust the latter semi-formal network, yet prospective hires must pass assorted tests before entering into the company. “Employers seek more intensive information about them using various screening procedures. Firms utilize pencil and paper tests, examine resume[s], portfolio[s], and recommendation letters, and conduct a series of interviews” (Chang 2003, 34). Other variables in the hiring process include one’s related skills, personality, and compatibility with the corporation’s structure.

The white-collar women who endured this rigorous recruitment and selection process, as of 2007, amounted to approximately 1/5 (22%) of the Korean corporate work force (Siegel, Pyun, and Cheon 2013, 29). Within the company, the corporate woman often exists in tandem to the corporate man, serving as a secretary or assistant, but rarely his equal or superior. High-level advancement for women in the corporate structure still remains uncommon. Heidrick & Struggles (2013) found 0% of women served as executives within Korea's biggest state-run companies, 0.73% served as CEOs amongst the 1,787 KOSPI-listed companies, and 1.5% served as executives at Korea's top ten corporate groups (8). Furthermore, only 1% of women were represented on company boards and only 2% of women held positions on executive committees (8). These alarming and depressingly real statistics are symptomatic of Korea's patriarchal society.

Companies that promote stereotypical notions of gender through their corporate culture aid in the marginalization of the woman worker. A Harvard Business School (HBS) report released in 2013 found "South Korea is representative of a large set of countries where the dominant ideology states that men are better suited for corporate and political leadership" (Siegel, Pyun, and Cheon 2013, 10). An anonymous male executive interviewed in the report argued that there are intrinsic differences between men and women that make men better suited to run companies:

Male life experience is unique in that homogenous male groups are efficient at drawing on that experience when organizing economic life. From that perspective, shared understandings and beliefs arising from the male life experience, including compulsory military service, equip men to absorb a set of command-and-control practices and to understand tacitly how to act most efficiently as a group. (Siegel, Pyun, and Cheon 2013, 12-13)

The *Old Boy* network described by the quoted male executive keeps power within stratified male-centric boundaries, neatly barring women from access to the exclusive men-only club.

Through hiring decisions, selective promotions, and merits based on seniority, corporations informally produce a system in which women seeking advancement in the corporate world frequently encounter the *glass ceiling*. The concept of the glass ceiling describes the difficulty that underrepresented groups (i.e. racial and gender minorities) face in the job market. These marginalized persons can only advance so far before running into the “glass” which keeps them boxed out of opportunity. In such cases, the excluded person can see what lies on the other side of the glass, yet that separate world remains a non-reality to her. In the Heidrick & Struggles (2013) report, 83% of surveyed women felt the existence of the invisible glass barrier, and 60% felt that the public lacks confidence in the professional competence of women (10). One participant in the survey asserted that “there [are] not invisible glass ceilings for women – just very visible ones!” (Heidrick & Struggles 2013, 13). Echoing these words, a recent article in the *Korea Times* (2012) suggests that, for Korean women, the “glass ceiling is more like concrete.”

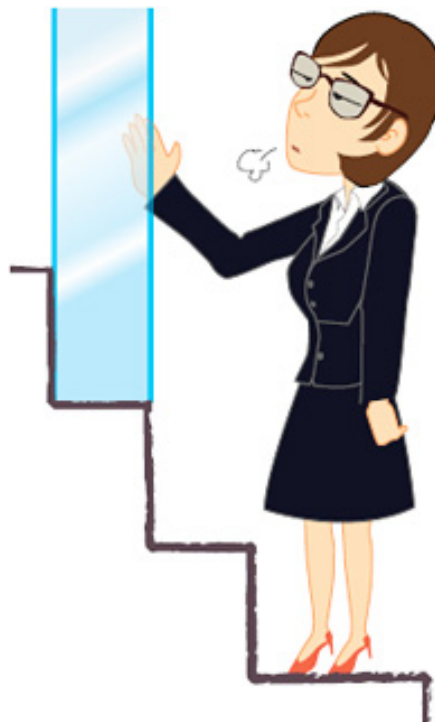


Figure 3 (on preceding page). Illustration from article about the glass ceiling for women in corporations. *Source:* Kim 2012.

In other words, Korean women are very aware of the struggles they face in wishing to advance their career prospects and in an attempt to shatter the glass ceiling – or crack the concrete – some Korean women adopt “manly” traits, such as assertiveness, to overcompensate for the perceived gender difference. However, a company’s decision to hire and promote women heavily weighs on the ideological construct of the emotional, irrational woman versus the logical, rational man.

#### *Double-Edged Sword – Gendered Nation-Branding*

In Korea’s developmental aspirations, the country sought not only to increase its global capital, but also its soft power. Coined by political scientist Joseph Nye, *soft power* refers to the relative level of a nation’s global influence (Nye, 1990). In addition to a country’s military and economic prowess, it also must demonstrate a degree of influence based on its culture and values. In other words, a country can command respect through its commitment to fostering positive relationships both inside and outside of its borders.

*Nation-branding* plays a considerable role in the acquisition of soft power. Fan (2005) defines nation-branding as:

A consistent and all-embracing strategy which determines the most realistic, most-competitive, and most compelling strategic vision for the country, and ensures that this vision is supported, reinforced, and enriched in each and every aspect of communication between the country and the rest of the world. ... Nation branding concerns a country’s whole image, covering political, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions. The concept is at the nation-level, multi-dimensional, and context-dependent. (6, 8)



Lee (2011) further classifies nation-branding into two categories: inbound prospects and outbound prospects. *Inbound prospects* refers to how attractive foreigners find a country's domestic offerings (e.g. tourist spots, companies, general well-being of the citizens), whereas *outbound prospects* refers to a country's reputation and trustworthiness abroad (Lee 2011, 125). Through nation-branding, a country projects its identity as an image for the rest of the world to see.

This image, however, can serve as a facade, masking the darker elements of society. On one hand, a country can represent the quintessential success story; yet on the other, it can structurally reproduce inequalities within its borders. In the Korean case, the nation outwardly and deliberately promotes its booming technological sector, its pop cultural influence, and its millennia of history—while purposely downplaying its gender inequalities and internal discord.

With the establishment of the Presidential Council on Nation Branding in January 2009, the Korean government formally attempted to solidify and improve its national brand image. The council's chair, Euh Yoon-dae, argues that Korea lacks “depth” due to its compressed modernization (Lee 2010, 71). Other global economic powers have existed for several hundred years, and therefore have had time to cement their identities and national brand, yet Korea, as a state in its comparative infancy, has not benefited from the same luxury of time. Euh continually stresses the importance for Korea to be recognizable on the global stage. To address the goal of maximizing a positive global image, the Korean state has staged various internationally watched events including the 1988 Summer Olympics, the 2002 World Cup, the 2010 G20 Summit (see Figure 4), and the 2012 International Expo.



Figure 4. World leaders in attendance at the 2010 G20 Seoul Summit. *Source: Korea Herald.*

Through these highly viewed publicity functions, Korea put its “best foot forward” and projected the ideal democratic, diplomatic, forward-thinking image of a modern nation. However, as we have seen, the Korean government and its Presidential Council on Nation Branding actively built its “modern” image on the decisively undemocratic principles of gender inequality, gross wealth disparity, and ideological perversion.

An understanding of the nuanced underpinnings of Korea’s current nation-branding project first requires an exploration of the dynamic of its gender symbolism. Specifically, the language and other symbols produced by compressed modernization imply a gendered understanding of nation building that translates into the nation branding rhetoric exhibited today.

Historically, women and men played different roles in the process of nation building:

Women are represented as the atavistic and authentic ‘body’ of national tradition (inert, backward-looking, and natural), embodying nationalism’s

conservative principle of continuity. Men, by contrast, represent the progressive agent of natural modernity (forward-thrusting, potent, and historic), embodying nationalism's progressive, or revolutionary principle of discontinuity. (McClintock 1993, 66)

Nationalistic discourse often ascribes feminine attributes to a country: for instance, in the familiar formulation "motherland." In Latin, *natio*, nation's linguistic root, means "that which has been born": thus the nation can be seen as the "mother" or "womb" of its citizens. McClintock (1993) specifies five intrinsic links between nations and women: women are "biological reproducers of the members of national collectives," "reproducers of the boundaries of national groups," "active transmitters and producers of national culture," "symbolic signifiers of national difference," and "active participants in national struggles" (62, 63). Across time and space, women performed the role of cultural gatekeeper, resisting foreign threats of cultural pollution or dissolution. Hoffman (1995) argues women, through both the symbolic nature and the maternal function patriarchal cultures associate with femininity, maintain a society's virtues and morals. "It is the female who is nearly always regarded as the embodiment of the essential virtues of social morality, a repository, and teacher of the moral and cultural ideas upon which the entire society is structured" (117).



Figure 5. Yu Gwan Sun Statue in Cheonan. *Source:* Photograph by kelly40Korea.

In Korea, one of the most poignant symbols of the former colonial nation stands at a busy intersection in Cheonan, where the fight for Korea's independence from Japan began (see Figure 5). The symbol, a bronze statue, depicts a young woman hoisting a Korean flag over her country. The young woman (read: nation) embodies the strength of the nation as she inspires her children (read: Korean citizens) with the spirit to resist the Japanese colonial power.

However, this romanticized notion of the "female" nation conflicts with the gendered discourses of "globalization." Korea's state-led economic development plan

effectively eliminated the female-inflected nation. In other words, the “female” nation gave way to a “male” state. This development has deep roots in Korea’s recent history. After Japanese rule from 1910 to 1945 and UN-occupation post-WWII, Korea actively fought to reclaim its “masculinity” to counteract its historical “feminization” after decades of foreign intervention. In order to put Korea on a path to international recognition, the state implemented both gendered and militarized economic policies:

The state hampering of working class subjectivities was to define workers interchangeably both in national terms and Confucian terms. Workers were often called ‘industrial soldiers’ in the national media while company owners were constructed as father figures and workers as children who should remain obedient to the company. (Kim, 2010: 56)

The image of the state/patriarch arose to protect the endangered nation/matriarch and her children. Whereas women previously signified strength and resistance, the developing Korean state viewed the country as “a fragile feminine being who [needed] to be rescued, protected, and guarded” (Sunindyo 1998, 4). Thus, nation-building projects during the era of compressed modernization adopted a masculine, authoritarian tone.

To achieve desired ends of industrialization and globalization, the state mobilized its citizenry based on an appeal to nationalistic sentiment.<sup>1</sup> Enloe (1989) writes:

“nationalism typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope” (44). Aware of its past colonial “demasculinization” and ready to show the world its national might, “father” Korea’s internal revolution compelled the “children” citizenry to work towards creating strong industries and solid infrastructure.

---

<sup>1</sup> Freeman (2001) ascribes globalization a masculine gender and defines it as “the spatial reorganization of production across national borders and a vast acceleration in the global circulation of capital, goods, and ideas (1008). The “organs” of capitalism (global finance, production, trade and telecommunication) are all male-oriented terms.

This analysis of the rise of the “male” Korean state and “father” figure can be complicated by noting inherent overlaps in discourse. From the 1960s to 1980s, the “female” nation did not completely disappear from the public sphere, as part of ideological nationalism begs the consideration of both “masculine” and “feminine” aspects of nation building. To use McClintock’s (2010) words, “female” continuity and “male” discontinuity simultaneously existed with and through one another. One of the reasons behind the success of Korea’s compressed modernity was that it intermixed traditional culture with the incoming wave of modernity. However, the complex gendered discourse surrounding the agents of nation building (i.e. nationalism, modernity, and globalization) often leave unforeseeable, overlooked, and all together ignored gaps in the fabric of society. For Korea, the same agents of its economic success became the source of its continued disparity between men and women.

Through the era of nation building into the current era of nation-branding, the Korean state intentionally used women and the notion of the female collective body. The state displayed its women to appear more in tune with “world” culture than it actually is:

As a country’s status of women is perceived to be not the result of the internal gender politics, but an indication of the nation’s international status, the expansion of women’s rights increasingly becomes ‘something given’ by the state. Korea’s OECD membership status is effecting an influence on the Korean society for women’s development, and the Korean government has to carry out the agenda for action and be evaluated on how well they are doing, systematic changes have to be made, at least on the formal level. (Kim 2010, 63)

The existence of women’s rights, woman participation in the work force, and male-female equality signify a country has made significant strides in becoming a viable international actor. Women are part of a country’s brand, the literal face of the nation. To encompass modern values, the status of a nation’s women, as the most historically and

universally marginalized group, should reflect the country's internal gains, providing a basic measure of its development. Korea, however, suffers a discord between its economic and its social situations. "Women of the reality are being deprived of economic rights and power while the image of advanced women enjoying benefits of civil rights prevail[s]" (Kim 2010, 65).

The internationally projected image of Korean women is a well-constructed and highly regulated fantasy. Public figures (i.e. actresses, singers, models, athletes, and other celebrities) represent a misleading microcosm of the greater female collective in Korea, while the average Korean woman remains hidden from the global world. Even new advances in smart technology have shifted to a sensationalized, more feminine model via curved smartphones and televisions. The mass-produced celebrity obscures the everywoman; she is hidden not through her own doing, but rather, the state prevents the world from viewing her. In other words, the "normal" Korean woman does not fully align with Korea's nation-branding strategies of today. The state-sponsored promotional campaigns do not allow room for an unfiltered reality to seep in through the fantastical peepholes. The optical illusion of modernity and globalization hold no place for deeply entrenched societal concerns about inequities and unfairness across gender. When Korea allows people beyond its borders to gaze through its faulty looking glass, they see an advanced nation poised to remain at the top of economic ranking systems well into the foreseeable future. The surface of the mirror reflects a beautiful notion of endless opportunity and equality, but with a few swipes at the occluding film of dust, the cracks in the image begin to show through.

This chapter has provided an analysis of the complex gendered process of Korea's initial and continuing developmental efforts. Since the 1960s, Korean women served as the standard for the nation's social, economic, and political well-being. In other words, women embodied the nation and more importantly, its face. While women served as Korea's image bearer, the lived reality for many women remained subpar compared to men. Symbolically, women represented the positive aspects of Korean society, such as unparalleled economic progress and educational superiority; in practice, women struggled to establish their footing in a masculine-dominated playing field. Nation-branding campaigns, highly regulated in nature, sought to cement a successful image for the world to witness by effectively glossing over the opportunity disparities between men and women. In order to gain traction as a nation, Korea had to mold itself to reflect qualities of ingenuity and resilience and silence discourse that revealed anything that would smudge Korea's image.

Despite the multifaceted nature of Korea's gendered developmental history, widespread nation-branding campaigns functioned as a catalyst for individual Koreans to undergo personal branding efforts. While the nation remade itself anew through structural renovations, the citizenry reconstructed itself via physical alterations. As a result, the late 1990s and 2000s saw the emergence of unique constitutions of self-identity, inspired by a rich historical past and fluctuating present.



## **Chapter Two - Unmasking the Face: History and Ideal of Facial Transformation in South Korea**

### *Bridging the Gap between Nation-Branding and Personal Branding*

As explored in the previous chapter, Korea's postwar reconstruction and industrial development rapidly transformed the political, social, and economic landscape of the country. Due to increased educational and career opportunities, women experienced a refashioned sense of upward mobility outside, though not necessarily independent, of the domestic sphere. Given the phenomenon of compressed modernization during its *hyperdevelopmental* state, Korea experienced a temporal rift between its modernity and culture, as definitions of each concept remained subject to the fluid nature of the times. In other words, the approximate period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s was characterized not only by the professionalization of the workforce, growth of the technological and industrial sectors, and remarkable gains in educational achievement, but also by the dichotomy between assumed masculine and feminine roles, state-sponsored nationalism campaigns along gendered lines, and patriarchy-infused nation-branding efforts. While nation-branding promoted Korea as an economic success story and a worthy global competitor, the problematic presence of gender inequality was minimized in public discourse.

After the 1997 IMF crisis, Korea again faced the task of rebounding from economic ruin. Classified as a time of humiliation and national shame, Korea contended with the devaluation of its currency (the *Won*), widespread corporate bankruptcy, and massive unemployment across all socioeconomic groups. Thanks to a combination of aggressive

reformation policies and international assistance programs (e.g. a World Bank loan package), Korea regained its spot as a Top 25 GDP nation by 2001. However, the IMF crisis continues to affect Korean society today, most notably in the job market. Korea currently suffers from comparatively slow economic growth coupled with an oversaturated market of available, qualified workers. Compared to other categories of workers, recent college graduates face stiff competition due to the limited availability of white collar jobs; therefore, individuals have sought ways to distinguish themselves from a pack of similarly (over)qualified candidates. Through personal branding, job candidates are able to emphasize aspects of themselves apart from the static set of skills contained in a resume. Moreover, as Korean companies require a headshot on the cover letter of a resume, the *face* has become an important signifier of one's potential success within a corporation. Job-seeking Koreans have come to realize that first impressions based on physical features can make the difference between landing a job and remaining unemployed.

While women and men alike contend with the challenge of the job hunt, Korean women have a greater burden when it comes to the presumed correlation of job seeking and physical appearance. Korea's historical gender discrimination within the workplace, complicated by its experience with colonial and cultural imperialism, and its symbolic emphasis on the *feminine body* as indicative of a nation's well-being: these factors have all influenced the *ideal* female Korean image. In conjunction with the aforementioned factors, the pervasive reach of mass media and the "marketplace of ideas" culture of the Internet have aided the spread and internalization of appearance standards. Without minimizing the past and present struggles of Korean men in maintaining their faces, in this chapter I choose to focus on the role of a woman's appearance as it pertains to her opportunities for

success, both in the workforce and in life more generally. I view the face as a means to denote value and marketability, thus I identify the face as a key element in personal branding. To conceptualize the link of the face to one's personal brand, I situate my analysis in the scholarship on aesthetics and the workforce, mass media and body consciousness, and neoliberal perceptions of the capitalist consumerism. I seek to challenge the existing discourse represented by the response to the Miss Korea photo collage discussed in the Introduction that reduces plastic surgery to mimicry of the West and a method of conformity. To accomplish this, I adopt a metacultural approach to unmask the significance behind an attractive *face*.

### *Branding the Face for Success*

Based on Kheder's (2010) definition, personal branding is "the process of establishing a unique persona identity, developing an active communication of one's own brand identity to a specific target market and evaluating its impact on one's image and reputation ... to fulfill personal and professional objectives" (2). Chronologically, personal branding followed the self-help literature movement popularized in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Lair, Sullivan, and Cheney (2005), self-help literature promised to "give individuals control over their economic destiny by shaping the package they present to others" (314). Although the scholarship on personal branding remains vague on the discursive shift from *self-help* to *personal branding*, many authors find that the usage of personal branding arose in the 1990s out of the global communications boom, in response to increasing competition in the work force (Lair, Sullivan, and Cheney 2005; Bendisch, Larsen, and Trueman 2007; Wee and Brooks 2010; Reunes 2013).

Every aspect of personhood can be subject to branding, and everyone can establish a brand by engaging with three types of capital: human, social and economic. Human capital relates to the investment in the self via education and physical means, social capital involves one's interpersonal relationships, and economic capital measures one's financial success and profitability. Bendisch, Larsen, and Trueman (2007) view personal branding as the pronouncement of one's identity to others, and Wee and Brooks (2010) expand on the link between identity and branding by incorporating a reflexive component. To successfully establish a personal brand involves the negotiation of the self against the self and the self against others. In other words, "the actor is expected to present a self that is constantly working on itself, to be itself, and its own relationship with others, all the while demonstrating that its behaviors are reflections of an authentically unique personality" (Wee and Brooks 2010, 56). Personal branding must not appear artificial or forced; rather, the brand should serve as a natural extension of an *improved* self. One can create a market for her brand through a tightly choreographed presentation of identity and self-commodification. As Lair, Sullivan, and Cheney (2005) argue:

In a world of change and opportunity, you can create and recreate yourself so as to be the master of your own destiny. In addition, personal branding carries the elevation of image over substance one step further: The world of appearance is not only articulated and accepted, it is valorized and held up as the only reasonable way to negotiate the contemporary world of work and professions, in short, the personal branding movement positions workers as irrational when they attempt to preserve and promote what they experience as their true or authentic selves. (314)

Personal branding requires a performative aspect in that the marketed body sells functional attributes without entirely sacrificing identity. In an attempt at personal branding, the *current* self temporarily lies dormant while an *idealized* version of the self takes the spotlight. Skills, motivations, and interests are arranged, crystallized and labeled

to better play the part required in society and the work force. As such, personal branding necessitates constant and considerable effort to achieve brand recognition and differentiation.

I argue physical appearance standards serve as an extension of personal branding. While Reunes (2013) cautions that branding is more than just presenting an object in a “glossy package,” I challenge and expand upon this stipulation (10). A person must necessarily have the required skill credentials to get a theoretical foot through the doorway, but I postulate that external appearance can put a person over the threshold and into a career. For Korea, the nation at the top of the OECD’s educational development index, qualified candidates seeking starter employment oversaturate the job market. According to a December 2013 unemployment report, approximately 7.5% of Koreans aged 15 to 29 were unemployed compared to the national average of 2.7% (The Korea Herald 2013). The summary of the report mentions that nearly half of recent college graduates are unemployed and those still in college often delay graduation due to difficulties in finding employment. Given the overwhelming competition in the job market, proper personal branding can make or break a job candidate. In order to distinguish oneself from a stack of resumes, Korean women have used plastic surgery to portray the “appearance of empowerment” and brand themselves in order to appear more successful (Lair, Sullivan, and Cheney 2005, 328). Here, I do not imply that a company literally associates a particular body construction with its brand; rather, I assert that certain physical features correspond to perceived successful and desirable characteristics.

### *An Attractive Face in the Labor and Social Markets*

Heilman and Saruwatari (1979) and Heilman and Stopeck (1985) speak to the gendered perceptions of job success and its correlation to appearance. In their 1979 study, Heilman and Saruwatari analyze hiring decisions based on attractiveness. Their findings reveal a positive correlation for female attractiveness and non-managerial work, yet a negative correlation for female attractiveness and managerial work. In other words, attractiveness is an asset for women seeking clerical positions, yet a detriment when attempting promotions up the hierarchical ladder. The researchers attribute this phenomenon to the gendered coding of labor. Historically male-oriented jobs (e.g. corporate leadership positions) exhibit a positive male bias and more actively discriminate against attractive women. The data indicated “people in organizationally powerful positions generally believe women to be unequipped temperamentally for the rigors of managerial responsibilities. It therefore seems that in their efforts to advance up the organizational ladder, attractive women are likely to be handicapped not only by their sex, but by their appearance” (Heilman and Saruwatari 1979, 361). Coincidentally, unattractive women benefit from their appearance in that they are coded as ‘masculine’ and are able to escape the negative personality stereotype associated with attractive females. In the 1985 follow-up study, Heilman and Stopeck confirm the gendered findings of the original 1979 study and correlate one’s level of attractiveness to earning and promotional potential. When compared to their unattractive counterparts, attractive women receive higher rankings when hired as clerical workers, yet unattractive women rank higher in managerial positions (210). The researchers conclude that companies hire and promote employees

along gendered lines by correlating female attractiveness to ‘feminine,’ non-managerial work and female unattractiveness to ‘masculine,’ managerial work.

Similar to the research of Heilman and Saruwatari (1979) and Heilman and Stopeck (1985), Drogosz and Levy (1996) and Lee and Ryu (2009) correlate physical attractiveness to workplace opportunities, whereas Kaw (1993) correlates one’s personal view of one’s own attractiveness to the likelihood of being hired. Drogosz and Levy (1996) confirm Heilman and Stopeck’s (1985) findings on physical attractiveness as a detriment to women’s advancement opportunities, but they also conclude that “regardless of gender, attractive managers had significantly higher ratings for promotions and expected future success than did unattractive managers” (Drogosz and Levy 1996, 444). Echoing this finding, Lee and Ryu (2009) find that a *beauty premium* exists when it comes to employment and earning potential, especially when a person boasts above average looks (15). The researchers also conclude that employers do not financially penalize “unattractive” employees, but rather, these individuals do not enjoy the residual financial benefits that are awarded to their attractive counterparts. Furthermore, Kaw (1993) discovered that women who viewed themselves as attractive were more confident in their ability to get a better job. The interviewed women felt appearance played a significant role in their economic and social opportunities (77-78).

Recent studies of Korean college students reveal a widespread awareness and, arguably, a tacit acceptance of the function of appearance in the work force. In a 2003 study, the average female student interviewee responded positively to the “belief that women should be beautiful and having surgery to be beautiful is a way of enhancing one’s worth” (Kim 2003, 580). Similarly, Korean respondents in Karupiah’s 2012 study on body

modification in Malaysia and Korea believed that “looking good is very important for employment and to succeed in life” and cosmetic procedures help to achieve “what’s important in the real world” (7).

Based on the existing literature on the link between attractiveness and increased workplace opportunity, no existing studies concretely explain the effect of plastic surgery on one’s ability to secure a job in Korea. Rather, appearance appears to be an integrated part of one’s overall promotional “package.” Studies of attractiveness suggest that above average physical appearance prevents upward mobility in the corporate world. I would argue that an overly attractive and skillfully capable woman poses a threat to the job security of men, who largely dominate the world of CEOs and managers. On the lower rungs of the corporate ladder, an attractive woman remains safely contained under layers of hierarchy, yet if she is allowed to break free of the chain that currently binds her (e.g. the glass ceiling), she presents an unwelcome challenge to the existing status quo. However, given that Korean corporations evaluate job applicants in part based on resume photos, a certain level of attractiveness may allow one to get her proverbial foot in the employment door.

### *Reading the Contours of the Face through Physiognomy*

The relationship between physical appearance and life success harkens back several millennia; in both ancient Greek and Chinese civilizations philosophers correlated appearance to personality traits. Traceable to the eras of Plato (429-347 BC), Aristotle (384-322 BC), and the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC), the practice of physiognomy has a deepseated history in discourses on physical appearance. *Physiognomy* attributes moral



and prophetic significance to individual areas of the body with a particular focus on the face. For both Eastern and Western societies, scholars of physiognomy believed one could *read* another's personality and derive essential moral being from facial composition. The importance of the face over other body parts stems from the prominence of the face in daily interactions. From an early age, humans learn to face someone speaking to them and initiate dialogue while making eye (face-to-face) contact. The face also serves as the principle conveyor of emotions and informs the judgments of others when deciding whether to trust their interlocutor. According to Wegenstein (2012):

What drives the history of physiognomy ... is the belief in the power of the face as the most symptomatic place for the soul to 'reveal' itself, and to be read. There is ... a tendency to freeze the ineffable qualities of a face in a system of strictly codified equivalences. This freezing of an 'ideal face' makes it possible to look not just underneath the skin in search of a code that explains an interiority, but more importantly it also reveals a *moral* [sic] code that explains human behavior. In this way the human body, particularly the face and its traits, becomes a symptom, something that leads elsewhere, or that misleads by 'hiding' something underneath. (Wegenstein 2006, 16)

The application of physiognomy links physical features to everyday reality as seen through the gaze of *the other*. The face is compartmentalized and each individual element depicts a readable truth about a person, yet what is deemed *true* about a person rests upon an external definer. Johann Kasper Lavater, a prolific 18<sup>th</sup>-century Swiss physiognomist, believed physiognomy would "improve the morality of people" and wanted to "systemize and operationalize the notion that appearance reflected one's morality" (Twine 2002, 73). As such, Lavater's teachings influenced the idea that temperament and upbringing could be *read* by studying the face of a person. In the case of women, Lavater posited "the ideal outer display is ... supposed to be *harmonious* [sic], the eyes straight focused, featuring a symmetry within all facial parts. Harmony and symmetry are markers for all positive

female characteristics ... motherliness, female wisdom, and devotion” (Wegenstein 2012, 39). Further, “the more innocent a woman’s appearance, hence the more noble or morally apt ... she is in character” (Wegenstein 2012, 35). Due to the work of Lavater, physiognomy in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries emphasized the external view as determinant of one’s nature. Retrospectively applying Jacques Lacan’s theory, physiognomy “goes hand and hand with the perception of the bodily self through somebody else’s gaze, or through the face of a medium” (Wegenstein 2006, 145). By associating outside markers to an internal consciousness, physiognomic practice objectified, isolated, and fragmented individual pieces of a person to arrive at a pseudo-scientific rationalization of the face.

Centuries before Lavaterian physiognomy took root in Europe, Korean physiognomists linked physical appearance to moral aptitude while additionally considering the face as indicative of socioeconomic prospects. Inspired by China’s *Maui’s Laws of Physiognomy* and India’s *Dharma’s Laws of Physiognomy*, Korean physiognomy gained popularity during the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392) and physiognomy as a career path began during the 17<sup>th</sup> century of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) (Yi 2006, 253). Korean physiognomy, like Lavaterian physiognomy, emphasized the face above other body parts. The Korean word for face, *eolgul*, “denotes that it is a place where [the] soul stays: *eol* meaning spirit or soul and *gul* [meaning] a cave or place to live in” (Shin, 2012, n.p.). The translation of *eolgul* suggests that one *reads* essential personhood from the face, and the purity, or lack thereof, of one’s soul appears apparent in the build of face. For Korean physiognomists, the “dichotomy between good and bad fortunes [was] based on people’s complexions”: a good complexion represented a future as a wealthy, high ranking official, yet a bad complexion signified a hard, dull life (Yi 2006, 254). To predict, and potentially

counteract, the physiognomic-influenced class associations, Koreans consulted professional physiognomists (face readers) who would *read* destiny by analyzing facial compositions against various diagrams. For women, sizeable eyes and tinted lips suggested future romance and happiness; plump cheeks, a straight nose, and a broad forehead symbolized wealth to come; and a bright, spotless complexion presaged a companionable life.

Cho Han-gi, an influential physiognomist in Korea, studied the perceived contrast between a respectable future and a dull future and how appearance impacted one's opportunities. His findings revealed that certain occupations have gained more *attractiveness* in the eyes of the public over others. When the public, through its external gaze, puts a position on a pedestal, then stereotypical beliefs about said position have positive associations, whereas the inverse holds true for devalued positions. In feudal Korea during the Joseon dynasty:

The appearance of those who hold government posts [was] regarded as noble because government posts and whatever is associated therewith [was] always held in high esteem and reverence. The faces of poor people [were] considered vulgar because people think that vulgarity [was] inextricably linked to poverty. At the root of this reasoning lies the general public who always [looked] up to the noble while always looking down on the base. (Yi 2006, 256)

Due to associations with *nobility*, the government class's appearance gained its value, while the *vulgar* associations of poverty caused the peasant class to appear *unattractive* and thus *without value*. Over time, wealth and high status defined attractiveness and beauty grew out of affluence. While not every member of the government class possessed stereotypical qualities of attractiveness and not every peasant appeared unattractive, the discourse surrounding attractiveness and unattractiveness normalized the correlation of beauty-to-wealth and ugliness-to-poverty.

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century into the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, physiognomy has been largely discredited as a false science steeped in racism and sexism. However, the vestiges of physiognomy “underlies many everyday assumptions about class, gender, and ‘race’, and now gets technologized as it provides the underlying ethos for practices such as cosmetic surgery,” especially in 21<sup>st</sup> century Korean society (Twine 2002, 68).

Physiognomy as a label for a practice may have fallen out of favor in the mainstream, yet the relationship between physical attractiveness and perceived characteristics still continues.

#### *“Modern” Physiognomy - Positive Value Association and Physical Appearance*

The scholarship on physical appearance from the past fifty years emphasizes the correlation between a person’s level of attractiveness and the assumptions one can derive based on appearance alone. Drogosz and Levy (1996) argue “attractive people, as compared to unattractive people, are thought to possess more desirable personal characteristics” (437). In general, attractive faces are associated with positive values such as friendliness, openness, success, and happiness, whereas unattractive faces conjure up negative associations such as unintelligence, coldness, limited mobility, and social ineptitude. Synnott (1990) postulates “beauty and ugliness are evaluated linguistically therefore, not only as physical opposites, but as moral opposites” (55). Humans, through a combination of social conditioning and “gut reactions,” (un)consciously stereotype another’s personality based on how positively or negatively they view his or her appearance. Woodstock (2001), as cited in Kim (2010), explains the appearance-personality correlation as a learned association propagated by mass media. “Mass media

[...] actively emphasizes the advantages of beauty and [associates] beauty with positive images such as happiness and success” (8). Therefore, the “ideal” image becomes one that is not only attractive, but also exudes the stereotypically positive qualities of attractiveness.

An examination of the literature on Asian-specific physical appearance reveals how stereotypical “Asian” features such as the monolid, flat nose, and wide face have been associated with unattractiveness and, consequently, the negative value associations of unattractiveness. Mikamo, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Japanese plastic surgeon, explains the “single-folded eyelids” as projecting a “monotonous and impassive” facial expression (Mikamo 1896, quoted in Riggs 2012, 160). Aston, Steinbrecht, and Walden (2009) note the “very ‘slender slit’ eyelid configuration, which severely restricts eye exposure, [creates] an illusion of limited social accessibility; and Kaw (1993) remarks that “stereotyped genetic physical features (‘small, slanty’ eyes and a ‘flat nose’)” have been associated with “negative behavioral characteristics, such as passivity, dullness, and a lack of sociability” (Aston Steinbrecht, and Walden 2009, n.p.; Kaw 1993, 75). Regardless of the source of such abhorrent views—these in particular stem from a legacy of cross-cultural racism and colonial indoctrination—they showcase how “unattractive” physical features relate to negative value association and resulting character judgments.

To inject a gendered element and highlight its implications within culturally specific boundaries, Riggs (2012) explore how perceptions of a woman’s attractiveness circulate through the larger East Asian community and more specifically, the Korean context. Riggs, citing Wen (2011), outlines how attractive women across the globe have enjoyed greater mobility based on their looks. Cross culturally, historical and present evidence suggest that women who have been valued for their physical attractiveness enjoy a “boost” in the eyes

of others. “A beautiful look is always a good ‘passport’ for a woman, no matter in the East or the West. Everybody loves beautiful women” (Riggs 2012, 151). For East Asian women, an attractive face often is held in higher esteem than body shape or weight (Swami et al., 2012). In simple terms, the “‘face’ represents a positive social value,” provided the “correct” features are present (Linridge and Wang, cited by Riggs 2012, 147).

In presenting the theories on value association in light of the pseudoscience of physiognomy, I highlight how a discredited practice served as the forefather to current discourse on the face, as well as the very real medical science of plastic and reconstructive surgery. For Korean society, the continuing importance of traditional physiognomy, whether classified as such or not, and the updated “physiognomic” theory on positive value association have strongly affected interpersonal relationships and economic prospects. Yet with the belief that physical appearance denotes one’s personality comes a downside that positions “racialized” features as the latest victim of appearance politics. The subversion of race becomes most evident in accusations that classify Korean plastic surgery as a vain attempt at looking *Westernized* and *less Korean*.

### *The Misclassified “Westernization” of the Korean Face*

U.S. and European news sites frequently report instances of Korean attempts to look more “Western” or “white.” A 2013 CNN article entitled “Asia’s ideal beauty: Looking Caucasian” stated: “To put it bluntly: Facial plastic surgery on Asians is about making a person look as Caucasian as possible” (Youn 2013, n.p.). Looking *Caucasian* or following the *Western beauty idea* typically refers to having big eyes and a high nose bridge along with a milky complexion (Lee and Ryu 2009, 227). After reading this article among countless

others with a similar message, I found it implausible that a cultural community or ethnic group can claim or be given ownership of a set of characteristics that appear across various ethnicities. I take issue at the reductive manner in which pieces like “Asia’s ideal beauty: Looking Caucasian” adopt an “if A is true, then B must be true” logic regarding the Korean facial image. Arriving at basic conclusions a la Youn neglects the historical, cultural, and social negotiations through which an appearance gains its value. Furthermore, to say that the Korean face is becoming more *Western* through plastic surgery begs the question of whether reshaping a droopy Finnish eyelid or slenderizing a Jewish nose is done to look more Western, if one can even be said to look more Western as a Westerner. Instead of entertaining non-contextualized claims of Koreans basing their ideal facial appearance on Western conceptions of attractiveness, I argue that centuries of cultural conquest and invasion, interethnic mingling, and the rise of transnational interconnectivity through modernity and globalization have caused a fundamental shift in the discourse on appearance.

The term *Westernization* as applied to the Asian aesthetic concept has its roots in the post-wartime conquests of the United States and European countries (e.g. Great Britain and France). Aston, Steinbrech, and Walden (2009) write:

The increased Western presence in Japan and the Philippine Islands in the aftermath of World War II, in Korea beginning in the 1950s, and in Southeast Asia thereafter, led to a misunderstanding - both by local surgeons and by Western surgeons - of the desire and intentions of those requesting Asian lid fold procedures. “Westernization” was somehow substituted for a subtle desire to enhance natural Asian beauty in a population that poorly understood the anatomical differences, and to what degree these differences were capable of impacting a person’s life. (n.p.)

Whether attributable to a translation error or the imposition of a surgeon’s desires on an unsuspecting population, *Westernization* came to refer to plastic

surgery procedures which altered the faces of Asians so that they looked more “Caucasian” and less ethnic. Westernization assumes the existence of an easily attributable Western look, one that inherently codes desirable facial constitutions within the confines of European racial and ethnic groups. At its core, this branch of Westernization discourse silences centuries of violence-induced racial mixing and places that which is *Western* at the pinnacle of global appearance standards.

Westernization harmfully positions the Western world as the poster child example, whereas the Eastern world can merely imitate and lag behind as not only cultural inferiors, but physical inferiors as well. Proponents of aesthetic Western superiority deny “the constructed nature of western beauty” and similarly fail to recognize that “all modern nations actively appropriate, reject, hybridize or acquiesce in elements of transcultural influences that circulate through the globalized media, cheap travel, and migrations” (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang 2013, 75). As such, *Westernized* appearance does not exist as a pure concept; rather, it hinges on that which is *impure*, “the globalized body ... which bears little resemblance to actual women in the West or the East” (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang 2013, 75).

Across time, cultures have used physical appearance to embrace and reject, celebrate and denounce, subjugate and liberate. To assert that Koreans desire a Western appearance buries the significance of major historical moments that have influenced the valuation of a globally influenced, yet *essentially Korean*, appearance. The *Korean ideal beauty*, mischaracterized as the *Western ideal beauty*, has come to represent the “concepts of status, upward mobility, and a social transition to global citizenship, not unlike the association of nobility to the government class in feudal



Korean society” (Riggs 2012, 204). Overall, what has been construed as Koreans attempting to look “Western” represents more than a set of physiognomic-delineated facial features or a fascination with ethnically stereotyped faces; rather, the effects of Japanese colonialism, American pseudo-imperialism, rapid modernization, and the technological boom each have played a significant part in the formulation of the Korean *face*.

Physiognomy and positive value association provide only two possible angles for the significance of an attractive face, and Korea’s history of compressed modernization further complicates the meaning of appearance in Korean society. As Twine (2002) states:

[Urbanization] increased general levels of ‘ontological insecurity’ and ... physiognomy was able to assuage the uncomfortable emotional experience of rapid socio-cultural change. Such an explanation, based on changing social and spatial arrangements, might also be appropriate in accounting for physiognomy’s long history and its continued contemporary importance. (Twine 2002, 73)

The battle between tradition and modernity mimics the ebb and flow of valued appearances across time. Fuller, moon-shaped faces (read: traditional) once held value in Korean society, yet now narrow, streamlined faces (read: modern) serve as the ideal towards which to strive. This aesthetic shift did not occur overnight, as decades of media indoctrination and recent technological advances aided in the new conceptualization of Korean attractiveness.

### *Media and the Promotion of the “Ideal Face”*

The Internet boom of the 1990s signified a fundamental shift in discourse about identity, interpersonal relationships, and the constitution of personhood. Arguably existing

as a byproduct of capitalism, the Internet provided a new marketplace of ideas, where one could compare his or herself to others in terms of human, social, and economic capital. In tandem with previously existing socialization agents such as television, print magazines, and radio, the Internet proved particularly enticing to advertisers as it provided the capacity to instantly reach a large audience regardless of physical location.

In the case of the fledgling capitalist nation of Korea, the proliferation of the Internet in the mid-1990s served as a gateway to modern consumerism. Similar to how the Korean state utilized women as symbols of progress and nation-building after the Korean War, a comparable trend emerged with the onset of the technological era of the 1990s. According to Kim (2003), the Internet revolutionized the landscape of Korean mass media, as companies marketed economic success and global culture as consumer ideals. The media actively targeted women as the principle agents of consumerism and their bodies as consumerism's principle site. Kim argues: "a woman's body itself becomes a site of global culture, signifying her elite status as a member of the cosmopolitan [...] global community by participating in the activity of global consumption of global products" (Rosenberg 1995, cited in Kim 2003, 98). The widespread nature of the Internet followed the rise of the Korean middle and upper classes of the late 1970s. In what can be considered a perfect storm scenario, Korean women had greater financial means to spend money at the same time that consumer culture set the standards for what was and was not desirable. Through the media's framework, neoliberal capitalist values such as individualism, self-improvement, self-recreation, and self-fulfillment paralleled one's consumption of beauty products and appearance standards. In other words, a woman could prove her "cosmopolitanism" or "proper cultivation" through the purchase of "it" products. Relating to Bourdieu's concept

of symbolic cultural capital, one can attain status “via consumption patterns, especially visual consumption, indicating specific forms of knowledge of the ‘right styles’, prized within the group” (Frost 2010, 59).

The irony in consumer culture is that control over one’s future and self-fulfillment of desire appear as the ultimate ideals of neoliberal capitalism, yet market forces create the very ideals toward which people strive. “How people are able to be and who they are able to be directly relates to the version of self available, often presented through advertising and branding” (Frost 2010, 54). Elite groups such as media conglomerates and corporations set the standards, while values like individualism that mask such operations serve as selling points. “If you can dream it, you can achieve it” messages of empowerment are well-crafted marketing techniques designed to create a “lack” within the self. By buying into a particular product or service, one can fill that perceived lack and therefore better oneself by doing so. Through the constant bombardment of advertisements and marketing slogans, this paradoxical process eventually becomes normalized and enters into the realm of the subconscious.

Notably for advertisements representing “ideal beauty,” the idea of “lack” translates into increased sales for cosmetic products and plastic surgery. According to Jee and Oh (2006), consumer culture creates a need and pliable consumers buy into the market to fulfill their need. “Most current advertisements do not present only the qualities and attributes of the product themselves. Rather, they emphasize looks, lifestyles and aspirations with which products seek to associate the product that they are trying to sell” (Shields and Heineken, quoted by Jee and Oh 2006, 11). Relating back to the positive value associations of attractive appearance, marketing techniques also portray products as

though they will in some way positively transform the life of the consumer. In most cases, advertisements sell the myth of attainability when in actuality, the fantasies established by advertisements operate on the idea of the unattainable. Plastic surgery ads in particular depict a standard of beauty that is impossible for Koreans to naturally (and arguably, surgically) achieve. Due to the prevalence of retouching images using manipulation software such as Adobe Photoshop, women showcased in advertisements can and do drastically differ from their unaltered selves. However, what the unaltered woman looks like is of little consequence to the consumer; the damage has already occurred on the psychological level and has been internalized.

Powerful and continuous reinforcing mechanism constantly inundate women with the idea that they are not living as their full, perfect selves, yet a remedy exists that can make the self “whole.” Images of “perfection” create a comparative culture where the self competes with fictitious (e.g. Photoshopped) images of “ideal beauty” and femininity. Blum (2005) calls these fictitious images the *Other Woman*. In her analysis, she identifies the Other Woman as the embodiment of the desirable. The Other Woman serves as a threat to one’s livelihood and future success, as she represents the “ideal beauty” boasting upward social and economic mobility. Blum rationalizes plastic surgery as the “dramatization of the relationship between a woman and an imaginary Other Woman figure, the perennial rival with who girls are taught to compete [with] the moment they know and care about what it means to be pretty” (110). Adopting the “homospectatorial look” when viewing advertisements, women, both consciously and unconsciously, covet features of the Other Woman and want parts of her body as their own (125). Thus, plastic surgery operates as a survival mechanism, so as to not lose out against the sensationalized competitor. For a

Korean woman living in a highly competitive state, it is not merely enough to consume the “ideal,” she must eventually perform as the Other Woman on an everyday basis.

With floods of plastic surgery advertisements for inspiration and the financial capability to undergo surgery, a woman can re-create and embody the self in the way she desires. The idea of reconstructing the self interestingly parallels the production and maintenance of one’s Internet persona. Online, one can present herself in the form that she best sees fit through selective manipulation. The Internet operates as a “costume,” allowing the freedom both for self-expression and exploration of other identities apart from one’s public persona (Belk 2013, 482). Avatars – customizable cartoon depictions of an Internet user – particularly allow for appearance changeability and fantasy fulfillment. With the explosion of social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Naver, and Daum, the use of avatars has given way to real-life photos, yet manipulation remains a key component of building a digital persona. Filters and Photoshop grant users the ability to portray their faces in the most desirable way. Arguably, the consistent alteration of one’s Internet persona in turn has a reflexive effect on the self. Digital consumption helps perpetuate the desire for real life self-reconstitution, while plastic surgery aids to bridge the disconnect between one’s virtual and real identity.

---

In this chapter, I explored the formulation of the Korean “ideal beauty standard” as a personal branding effort rooted in physiognomic and positive value association discourse. I continue to use quotations around “ideal beauty” as I recognize the changeable nature of what constitutes an “ideal.” Ideas surrounding beauty are continually subjected to

numerous actors and are not universally applicable across a population. In recognizing the evolving nature of beauty, I concede that the theories I have presented represent only a selective few of the numerous explanations for the current Korean “beauty ideal” for women, yet I have touched upon the theories that I feel best explain the appearance culture evidenced in 21st century Korean society. Various historical factors such as Japanese imperialism, U.S.-aided reconstruction efforts, and compressed modernization aided in the “ideal beauty” formulation, while mass media popularized particular components of the face. In addition to these factors, I would be remiss without saying that Korea’s “ideal beauty” is not merely a transplant of standards borrowed from other countries. Rather, what I refer to as “ideal beauty” for Korean women represents the processes of negotiation, cultural re-appropriation, and transformation. I view mass media as playing the largest role in these processes, given its ability to reach widespread audiences instantly

What we know as “plastic surgery” today originally served as a means to remedy facial deformities in order to return the affected patients to a sense of normalcy. The evolution of surgical techniques, recognition of plastic surgery as a sub-specialty of medical practice, and the growth of private cosmetic surgery clinics all proved instrumental in Korea’s current status as the number one per capita consumer of plastic surgery globally. The rise and sustainability of Korea’s plastic surgery industry resulted from a unique hybridization of American and Japanese teachings with a quintessential Koreanness at the core of the practice. Current discourse on plastic surgery, both globally and in Korea, remains divided between those who believe plastic surgery is an instrument of the patriarch to organize its citizenry along appropriated gender lines and those who believe plastic surgery is a realization of self-identity and autonomy. It is not my intent to squarely

situate my analysis within either of these two camps, as both sides present equally valuable contributions to the field on aesthetics within cultural structures.

### **Chapter Three - Desirability and Marketability of the (Un)Altered Body**

#### *The Transformation of the Global Reconstructive Medical Field*

Plastic surgery did not suddenly enter Korea as a means to transform, or rebrand, the body. Nearly a century before the market for aesthetic enhancements became commonplace in Korea, reconstructive plastic surgery stood at the forefront of Enlightenment-era medical practice. From the 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe, surgeons ushered in new methods of dealing with physical deformities caused by syphilis. In cases where syphilis disfigured the patient's face, medical practitioners masked the ill physical effects of the disease through nose reconstruction, skin grafting, ear prosthetics, and cosmetic application. Whereas the prescribed remedies in these cases largely remained superficial, such treatment of syphilis marked a turning point in the application of surgical science. Apart from controlling sickness and infection, the medical field started to consider the physical body as malleable, correctable, and even improvable. The cosmetic remedies prescribed for patients of syphilis "served as the basis for many of the technical innovations in aesthetic surgery" (Gilman 1998, 21).

Enlightenment thinkers likened reconstructive surgery to the liberation of the self. "It is not that the reconstructed body was invented at the end of the [19<sup>th</sup> century], but rather that questions about the ability of the individual to be transformed, which had been articulated as social or political in the context of the state, came to be defined as biological and medical" (Gilman 1999,19). Syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease, signified an abnormality and attached to the disease came the public's adverse reaction to its sufferers. Reconstructive surgery offered syphilis sufferers a chance to transform their bodies to align with societal expectations of physical appearance and make the self "whole" once



again. Through achieving freedom from social stigma, the syphilis patient, albeit still infected, could live life with a new sense of normalcy.

The application of reconstructive surgical science to address social problems and fulfill personal desires continued in to the war-riddled 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the months and years following World War I, reconstructive plastic surgery gained traction as a means for helping disfigured war veterans reclaim something of their former appearance and sense of self. Haiken (2000) views wartime reconstructive surgery as a way to reintegrate its recipients into society; through attaining a level of control over his appearance, the cosmetically repaired soldier gains hold over his prospective future and solidifies his identity in line with societal norms.

In addition to repairing the faces and bodies of wounded soldiers, a new class of surgical patients blipped on the reconstructive radar: immigrants. In the U.S. in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the forces of “industrialization, urbanization, immigration and migration” presented different challenges to the constitution of one’s personhood (Haiken 2000, 83). Appearance became a point of inclusion and exclusion, as one’s claim to “Americanness” often remained contingent on physical signifiers. In part due to a xenophobic reaction to the steady influx of Irish and Jewish immigrants, the shape of one’s nose served as the gatekeeper to the “American dream.” The medical field developed reconstructive surgery as a natural response. Jewish immigrants, in particular, sought out rhinoplasty (corrective nose surgery) to reduce nose size in hopes of “passing” as American. “The nose [came] to signify the erasure of visible difference and the permanent alteration of the perception of difference, disease, and ‘bad’ character” (Gilman 1999, 189). Although the question of what constitutes “looking American” remains largely unanswerable given the “melting pot”

dynamic of the country, appearance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century constituted a part of one's public identity.

Suissa (2008) argues the societal marketplace of ideas sets the acceptable standards of appearance at any given point in history. To varying degrees throughout history, art, fashion, and architecture react to shifts in the public's perception of "the normal." As such, the members of a particular culture value certain physical characteristics over others across time. "Although the body is a priori a physical object, one must also speak of the social body, since the social gaze on the body is a determining factor in the process of judging what is acceptable and what is less so" (620). Buying into the societal marketplace of ideas helps explain the consumption of reconstructive surgery as a method of identity alteration and assimilation. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reconstructive surgery functioned as a tool to *fit in*, whether one wished to fit in through masking physical or violence-induced deformities or *fit in* to a potentially hostile political and social landscape, as seen during the years and decades of the United States' immigration waves. From the 1920s onwards, reconstructive surgery steadily moved towards current 21<sup>st</sup> century plastic surgery philosophy, though notably without the transparency and public discourse afforded in today's understanding of body modification practices. Elfving-Hwang (2013) expands upon Enlightenment notions of reconstructive surgery by connecting self-improvement and class mobility to the literal embodiment of one's desired class or identity. "The perceived necessity to display the markers of cultured appearance as a sign of consumer middle class identity, emerges as a highly affective force encouraging individuals to perceive aesthetic surgical intervention as a practical and normative option for self-improvement" (Elfving-Hwang 2013, n.p.). Reconstructive surgery teased with the

promises of youth, success, and power for those willing (and financially able) to subject themselves to the blade of the surgical knife. However, given the relative unattainability of reconstructive surgery due its high costs and controversial nature, the practice primarily existed amongst celebrity and wealthy circles for first half of the 20th century.

In the aftermath of World War II, the newly-formed United Nations sub-branch, the World Health Organization (WHO), addressed the global problems of disease outbreak, sanitation, well-being, and public health: the last of which served as a pivotal cornerstone for the fields of medicine and surgical practice. According to WHO, “healthy” encompassed the “complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease of infirmity” (WHO 1948, n.p.). Practitioners of reconstructive surgery benefited from the reconceptualization of “health” and “well-being” as having implications beyond the physical state. To be considered “healthy” required a consideration of one’s psychological health, outlook on life, and quality of interaction with others, in addition to the prerequisite physical assessment. This new train of thought soon led to surgical practices that actively addressed patients’ desire to recreate themselves in ways that echoed 1920s and 1930s reconstructive philosophies, yet without the degree of public whispers about the practice. As Haiken (2000) states:

Individual well-being depends on mental as well as physical health, and a mentally healthy person is one who feels comfortable functioning in society in which he or she lives. Medical practitioners have accepted, even embraced, the conviction that their mission is to repair the disjunction that can develop between the internal and the external - to facilitate “wellness” by facilitating the development of an identity that feels authentic. Thus, they argue, cosmetic surgery is primarily about identity. (88)

From reconstructive surgery’s traceable roots as a tool to combat physical deformities to its broadening applications for those seeking to reinvent their physical

selves, the landscape of surgical science has offered numerous possibilities for both doctors and patients. The second half of the twentieth century saw the pervasion of reconstructive surgery for aesthetic purposes, the professionalization of “plastic surgery” under the umbrella of medical practice, and the popularization of plastic surgery in South Korean society.

### *Reconstructive and Plastic Surgery Arrive In South Korea*

*The meanings and practices of aesthetic surgery represent a process of negotiation between multiple discourses concerning national identity, globalized and regionalized standards of beauty, official and non-official religion, traditional beliefs and practices (in some instances historically imported from some other place), as well as the symbolic practices of coming of age, caring for the self, making social status and seeking success.*

*-Holliday and Elfving-Hwang 2013, 59*

Two pivotal moments in Korean history illuminate the pathway to plastic surgery as it exists in 21<sup>st</sup> century Korean society: 1) 1950s wartime reconstructive plastic surgery popularized existing forms of nose and eyelid surgery; and 2) 1970s healthcare and well-being reforms aided in the privatization of specialized patient care. The former addresses the United States and Japan’s influences on Korean body modification techniques, while the later explains the homegrown system that gave rise to the mass-market for plastic surgery consumerism.

Considered a pioneer of skin grafts and cleft lip surgery, Dr. David Ralph Millard, a U.S. Navy surgeon, encountered a new kind of challenge upon his arrival to war-stricken Korea in 1953. As documented in his physician’s log, Millard noted an instance where a

patient requested surgery to achieve a “round eye.”<sup>2</sup> Soon after the incident, Millard worked on a surgical technique which would fix both the “flat nose and oriental eye” of his patients (DiMoia 2013, 179). Although Japanese and Chinese surgeons documented trial evidence of eyelid and nose surgery since 1896, Millard aided in the spread of the popularity of such surgeries. It is worth noting that Millard performed operations only on the wounded to restore the body and spirit and in the 1950s, and plastic surgery still remained primarily non-aesthetic in nature. Millard’s patient trials paralleled the medical practices of WWI and WWII, as identity and perception of self-worth appeared synonymous with the face and physical appearance served as a reflection of social norms of bodily health. The end result of Millard’s surgeries provided his patients with “a measure of self-transformation” and a “sense of control” (DiMoia 2013, 185).

Korean medicine continued to mature in the latter half of the 1950s with the introduction of physical therapy and the construction of rehabilitation centers, but professionalization of Korean plastic surgery began in the following decades. In 1961, Yonsei University founded the Department of Plastic Surgery and Reconstructive Surgery ahead of the formal legal recognition of the practice, yet surgery for aesthetic reasons still remained uncommon and suffered from social stigmas attached to vanity. Pivotal in 1973, plastic surgery entered into the ranks of an officially sanctioned subspecialty of medicine and four years later, the Korean government under President Park Chung Hee revamped the country’s healthcare laws.

---

<sup>2</sup> Regarding the patient requesting a “round eye,” DiMoia quotes directly from the journal of Millard. Reasons for such a request can only be left up to speculation, as Millard provided no additional context of this account. Perhaps the patient’s request for a “round eye” signified a desire to return to his post-disfiguration facial state, or even a desire to improve upon his perceived pre-injury state.

Prior to the 1977 healthcare reform, inaccessibility and self-diagnosis characterized doctor-patient care. In other words, Koreans had little access to hospital services apart from attaining a basic standard of welfare. After the implementation of the new healthcare law, rural residents continued to receive substandard care while the “clusters of white-collar workers, bureaucrats, and a select number of industrial workers, those holding a significant investment in the state and its projects” received improved coverage (DiMoia 2013, 195). One decade later in 1989, the government reformed the healthcare law a second time, and at last, universal health care became a reality.

The new healthcare landscape presented better opportunities for plastic surgeons wishing to open private practices. During the late 1980s, aesthetic surgery took hold as fewer government regulations and greater economic incentives motivated surgeons to relocate to the budding hub of affluency: an area of Seoul lying south of the Han River called Gangnam. Due to Gangnam’s synonymy with reliable high quality, style, and wealth, plastic surgeons moved en masse to its multistory complexes and enjoyed the influx of rich Korean and foreign clientele. The age of the celebrity surgeon took hold, as plastic surgeons advertised their services via print and television campaigns for the first time. As a result of its popularity with celebrities and increasingly prevalent advertisements, the consumption of plastic surgery as a form of self-improvement and method of branding began in the late 1990s into the early 2000s.

### *Marketing Plastic Surgery – An Internet Case Study*

To ascertain whether aesthetic principles (physiognomy and positive value association) align with surgical practice (invasive facial reconstruction), I compare and

contrast the websites of seven Korean plastic surgery hospitals and one Korean medical tourism company with my findings in Chapter Two. The seven hospitals are JW Plastic Surgery Korea, BK Plastic Surgery Hospital, VIP International Plastic Surgery Center, ID Korea Plastic Surgery Hospital, Wonjin Aesthetic Surgery Clinic, and Pitangui Medical and Beauty; the medical tourism site is Seoul TouchUp. Given that facial surgeries are most popular in Korea, I principally study cases where a patient has received one or more of the following: blepharoplasty (eyelid surgery), rhinoplasty (nose surgery), or orthognathic surgery (jaw surgery). All websites were analyzed in the English language version provided by the hospitals and tourist agency.

A quick overview of my findings reveals a strong correlation between aesthetic surgery and self-improvement in social terms. Nose jobs, in particular, resonated with allegedly increased opportunities, both socially and financially. The idea of physiognomy and positive value association prevailed on virtually all websites, and personal branding appeared in a few notable cases. In the discussion section, I apply Wegenstein's (2012) theory of the cosmetic gaze, as well as Holliday and Elfving-Hwang's (2012) theory of inauspiciousness to complicate the messages marketed on the selected websites.

### *Mission Statements and Marketing of Surgical Procedures*

Mission statements of the majority of hospitals reviewed focused on notions of natural beauty and sophistication, in addition to portraying plastic surgery as a means of personal re-creation and expressing individuality. For example, as stated in a December 2011 video on their YouTube channel, VIP International's philosophy is "empowering patients with not only outer beauty, but also confidence, hope, and inner beauty." Through

surgery, a patient can make herself into her ideal and outwardly project an improved persona to the world (e.g. create a distinguishable personal brand). Additionally, Seoul TouchUp and Wonjin correlate the idea of self re-creation to higher mobility, both locally and abroad. Seoul TouchUp's homepage notes "beauty brings not only gratification but a degree of status in contemporary Korean society, where first impressions make a lasting impact." Plastic surgery seemingly fulfills the fantasy of improved opportunities and makes "dreams come true," as JW Plastic Surgery Hospital's advertising insists.



Figure 6. Video advertisement promoting Korean plastic surgery industry. *Source:* Seoul TouchUp website.

Figure 6, a still from a video on Seoul TouchUp's website, speaks to the idea of plastic surgery as filling a *lack*. It entices the consumer to make herself *complete* through physical alteration, almost begging her to view beauty as what she is missing. Relating back to the



media's creation of desire, this advertisement presents a beautiful physical appearance as a void in one's life: one can realize her *full* self by going under the knife.

Wonjin Aesthetic Surgery's website similarly promotes the idea of revealing one's "hidden potential" through surgery, yet uniquely considers "beauty as a privilege for women." Although Korean plastic surgery is comparatively cheaper than similar procedures performed in neighboring China and Japan, it seems the ability to afford plastic surgery in and of itself is a means of exclusion. In other words, the consumption of plastic surgery may represent access to a particular kind of status, one that is not universally affordable or realistically attainable.

In regards to blepharoplasty and rhinoplasty, the analyzed websites converge on what the altered eye and nose represent. With a focus on a natural, non-surgical look, JW Plastic Surgery and Wonjin emphasize balance between the nose and the eyes, with Wonjin's website particularly emphasizing a proportional standard for the face: "a wonderful eye's Golden Ratio. It's not just the size of the eye that's important. It's when the eye snugly fits the proportion of the face that it appears most natural and beautiful." In simple terms, the best type of surgery is one that looks as if nothing was done in the first place: "surgically created beauty must erase the processes of its construction to emulate natural, non-made up beauty" (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang 2012, 62). In addition to a strong emphasis on harmony between all elements of the face, several hospitals assigned value attributes to the nose and eyes. Of all the websites, ID Hospital most strongly stressed that a sharp nose can make a woman look more "feminine, lovely, and sophisticated," whereas a bulbous nose makes her look "masculine, clumsy, and boorish."



Figure 7. Proposed surgical procedures. *Source:* ID Korea Plastic Surgery Hospital website.

Figure 7, from ID Hospital's "Real ID Stories," demonstrates the classification and proposed correction of various features of the pictured woman's face. After surgery, her nose will turn "sassy and sophisticated," while her jawline will emphasize her "feminine" face. ID Hospital's advertising beckons the consumer to "get an ideal nose that fits every situation – at club, party, job interview, and blind date"; rhinoplasty "transforms you to be confident, sexy, and cute." JW Hospital corroborates the message promoted on ID Hospital's website by portraying a sharp nose as "beautiful" and "sophisticated," and further expands by identifying the eye as an "important feature when trying to make a good first impression," given the importance of eye contact.

### *Before and After Testimonials*

A typical feature of Korean plastic surgery websites is the satisfied patient testimonial. Analysis of the subject websites shows a high incidence of positive value adjectives used by both patients and doctors after the recovery period. The good results noted about plastic surgery tend to cluster around particular outcomes. Like the marketing taglines used in the promotion of eye and nose surgery, the general narrative of before and after surgical diaries testifies to an improved life situation, broadened career opportunities, and healthy interpersonal relationships. Overall, it appears that patients, in retrospect, felt their former physical appearance negatively impacted their life; after receiving plastic surgery, patients felt more confident and earned positive feedback from friends and employers.

Although many websites merely featured before and photos of the clientele, BK Plastic Surgery Hospital, Pitangui Medical and Beauty, and ID Korea Plastic Surgery Hospital tracked several of their patients' pre- and post-surgery journeys, while documenting their experiences in a diary framework.



Figure 8. Ja Kyung's post-surgery transformation. *Source:* BK Plastic Surgery Hospital website.

Featured in the “Real Story” section of BK Plastic Surgery Hospital’s website, Ja Kyung’s “happy ending” is portrayed as a transformative tale in which the protagonist has extensive surgery and, upon recovery, meets with positive feedback and enjoys unprecedented successful interpersonal interactions (see figure 8). After undergoing rhinoplasty and facial fat grafting (in which fillers created from tissue from other body parts are inserted to plump up features), her “angry” and rough facial expression gave way to “beautiful” features allowing her to make a good first impression. Ja Kyung’s new “brighter” appearance gave her a happiness boost, which she feels has made her more satisfied with herself. As a result, Ja Kyung noticed her “positive mind” now makes her more attractive to those around her.

Ja Kyung's tale of post-surgical elevated happiness and personal confidence is almost universal in nature in such testimonials. In their January 22, 2013 YouTube video, Pitangui Medical and Beauty followed the before and after progress of Soo Jung, as she underwent eye, nose, and fat grafting procedures. Initially, Soo Jung confessed unhappiness with her appearance and wished to correct her "droopy, small eyes." Upon recommendation from her plastic surgeon, Yoo Jae Seong, she agreed to fix her "flat" forehead and cheekbones in order to have a "confident and lively image." Marketed as a "life changing" procedure, Soo Jung's "natural" result boosted her self-esteem, earning praise from friends and her doctor alike. In ID Hospital's website narrative of a plastic surgery patient, Lee Su Gyeong felt her protruding jaw was holding her back from her dream of becoming an elementary school teacher. While enrolled in a teaching training program, students bullied her and called her a witch due to the shape of her chin. Su Gyeong opted for a bimaxillary (double jawbone) surgery to alleviate her perceived defect. Post-operatively she felt as though a miracle had happened, and each passing day served as an improvement over the previous day.

Thanks to surgical and medical advances in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, plastic surgery allows a patient to partition her body into pieces so that she can disassemble and reassemble a *better* self. Given the accessible affordability of plastic surgery in Korea, one's birth body is no longer the body in which one must experience the rest of her life. Pervasive marketing tactics evidenced in the data above beckon one to change her outer self to match her inner personality and, in a nod to physiognomy, physically showcase attractive qualities, such as confidence and happiness, on her face. The patient "*can* [sic] better [herself] ... the whole bony system with the fleshy parts, the whole frame taken together -

figure, colour [sic], voice, gait, smell - every thing, in a word, has a relation to the face, and is liable to ... improvement" (Wegenstein 2012, 24). Surgical reconstruction can fill any perceived deficiencies in the physical self and prevent the *misreading* of one's character.

To experience harmony between one's mind and body requires the negotiation of several actors, two of which are the patient and *the other*. The other may be a family member, friend, plastic surgeon, society, corporation, or some other entity that behaves as an external judgmental force. Regardless of who acts as the other, the patient must navigate her physical appearance in consideration of both her own feelings about her identity and the other's perception of her identity. Wegenstein (2006) defines this internal inspection versus external semanticization as *the cosmetic gaze*. The cosmetic gaze is:

One through which the act of looking at our bodies and those of others is already informed by the techniques, expectations, and strategies of bodily modification; it is also and perhaps most importantly a moralizing gaze, a way of looking at bodies as awaiting an improvement, physical and spiritual that is already present in the body's structure as an absence or a need. (Wegenstein 2012, 12)

In Korea, the ability to look at oneself and others utilizing the cosmetic gaze arguably stems from the onset of modernity, along with the "improvement" and "competition" discourses born out of capitalism. Where infrastructure and architecture were stripped down and rebuilt during Korea's era of compressed modernization and nation-building, the physical body and mental self must similarly undergo the process of reinvention. "Out with the old, in with the new" operates as a quasi-motto for plastic surgery transformation; a dreamlike, *improved* self emerges after the requisite renovation period. Motivated by the longing to portray her *true* self, the patient actively engages in the recognition of *undesirable* features and seeks to exchange them for *desirable* ones.

Desirable features, such as large eyes and a prominent nose, imply a degree of right(eous)ness, and right(eous)ness allows one to impress the outside world. For Koreans, the *right* face is “one with no inauspicious features and one that connotes youth, vitality, and upper-class looks” (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang 2012, 73). The transformed face simultaneously blends in as it stands out: surgery eliminates bulbous and large aspects of the face and highlights *normal*, relationally smaller pieces. The *pretty-normal* face allows the patient to adapt easily to the environment at hand, minimizing the risk of physiognomic discord between the inside and outside.

---

In this chapter, I have explored the rise of Korea’s plastic surgery field and analyzed several plastic surgery advertisements through the lenses of physiognomy and positive value association. Based on the analyzed research, I find a strong correlation between the promises contained in plastic surgery advertisements and the actualization of these promises in testimonials from patients after receiving plastic surgery: unsurprising given the marketing purposes of the websites studied. What is striking, however, is the insistence of both advertising and testimonials on the *kind* of change that plastic surgery brings about: not simply a more attractive appearance, but a better, happier, more integrated, more fulfilled life. Based on the historical application of value association and physiognomy, advertising for plastic surgery in Korea seems to appeal, on a basic level, to what is likely unconscious physiognomic philosophy.

## **Conclusion – The Future of Korea’s Plastic Surgery Industry**

In hopes of providing an alternative to the scholarship that simply classifies Korean plastic surgery as a desire to look more Western, I have provided an approach that contextualizes Korean plastic surgery as the result of three-plus decades of reflexive branding efforts. Nation-branding provided the necessary spark that allowed for Korean women to think of themselves as more than static cogs winding around an industrial machine. Plastic surgery opened the doors for a reconceptualization of one’s identity and allowed for the formation of a personal brand. Although women elect to go under the knife for various reasons, 21<sup>st</sup> century Korean society suggests that both economic and social competition play a decisive part in the decision-making process. The media, specifically advertisements, socialize women into believing that an attractive appearance will ease one’s journey through life and will bring her success and happiness.

While plastic surgery advertisements promote plastic surgery as a highly desirable method of self-actualization, I cannot help but question the sustainability of the surgery-to-success pipeline. Plastic surgery testimonials tend to gloss over surgical complications just as they neglect to provide long-term updates on how plastic surgery has impacted the recipient’s life. The marketing taglines used in Korean plastic surgery advertisements often conveniently overlook the reality that an appearance can only push one so far in life. Plastic surgery companies continually feed the masses on the idea that an improved appearance can serve as a remedy for one’s non-physical flaws. More so than focusing on situational testimonies that link one’s decision to undergo plastic surgery as resulting in a career or



some other positive change, websites focus on physiognomic benefits such as increased confidence and boosted self-esteem.

According to a June 6, 2013 article by Business Insider's Megan Willet, approximately one in five Koreans has had plastic surgery and 80% would consider it. The increasing prevalence and normalcy of plastic surgery strongly makes me question whether one can satiate the desire for an attractive appearance or if the hunt will futilely continue on into the foreseeable future. As surgeries compound on top of one another, so must the standard for what is considered attractive. For instance, if one starts off with a "simple" surgery such as the creation of a double eyelid, this adjustment often serves as a gateway to more invasive procedures such as double jaw surgery or facial contouring. With each nip and tuck, one continually partitions her body into parts that may be swapped out for the latest, shiniest model. In conjunction with the media's tendency to sensationalize the "It Girls" of the moment, attractiveness moves further and further into the realm of the unattainable. As one ages, the prospect of reaching such a goal recedes even further into the distance.

If Korea's rate of plastic surgery progresses at its current pace, then soon surgically enhanced attractiveness will be the *de facto* normal. This prospect suggests several possible consequences for Korea and its plastic surgery clinics. One, if a large majority looks attractive, then the qualification for attractiveness will shift in a new direction. Advertising works to create a lack, and in the event of market oversaturation, what is *in* one minute is considered *out* the next. Therefore, the features that comprise the current Korean "ideal beauty" could vary drastically in upcoming years. Second, a strong emphasis on physical appearance has potential ramifications for upcoming generations. For a child to

grow up knowing that she will more than likely receive some form of plastic surgery, the incentive to perform well in other aspects of life (for instance, to excel in school, to nurture artistic talents) may diminish if looks serve as a fallback mechanism. To put it another way, if an attractive appearance proves to correlate to more friends, admission to a top university, and employment upon graduation, then acquisition of useful skills would not appear to top the list of priorities. Finally, if an attractive appearance has been used to compete in economic and social circles, what becomes the new competitive edge when most people are considered attractive? Are skills yet again valued as the primary exclusionary tool?

Apart from these ruminations regarding the sustainability of Korea's current plastic surgery scene, I cannot neglect the existence of men who opt for plastic surgery (see Figure 9). As noted in the Introduction, plastic surgery is not reserved for Korean women. According to a 2010 report released by the Korean Association of Plastic Surgeons, approximately 15% of Korean men have undergone one or more plastic surgery procedures (Stomp and Korean Herald, 2013, n.p.).

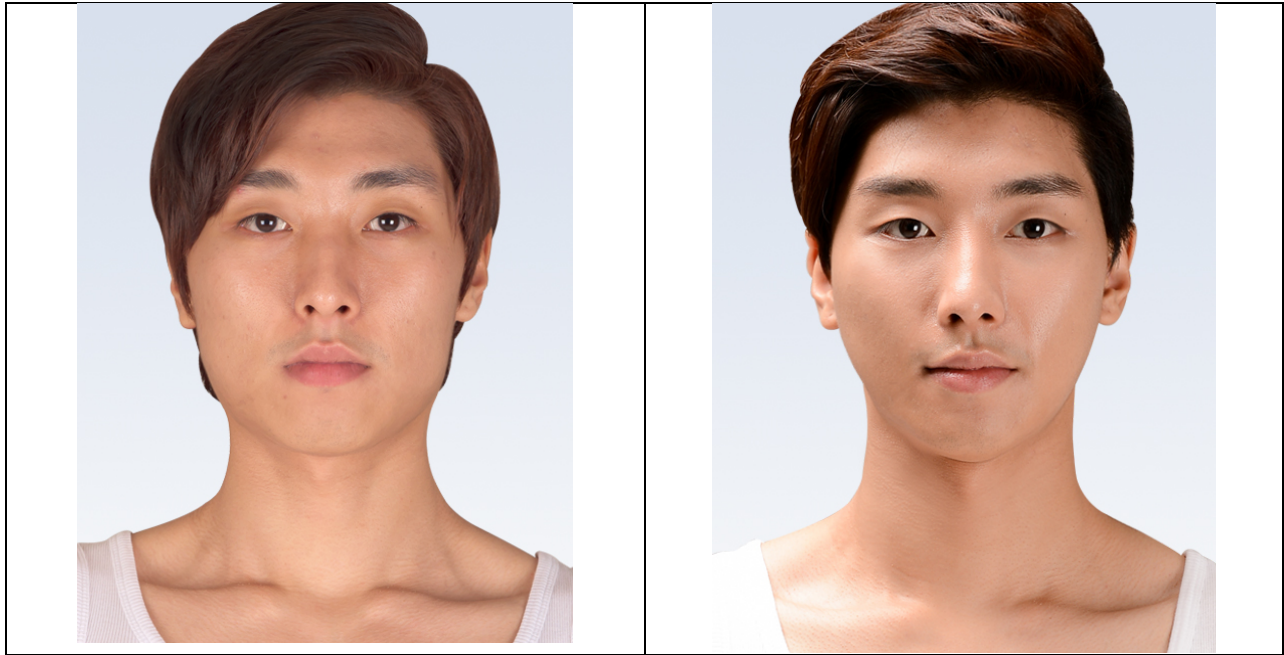


Figure 9. Pre- and post-surgical photos of Korean man. *Source:* Pitangui Medical and Beauty website.

When compared to women, men interestingly cited similar reasons for wanting to go under the knife. Desires to compete in the economic market and retain (or regain) one's youthfulness rank at the top of reasons for getting plastic surgery. In a 2012 Seoul-based ABC news segment, several men even revealed they felt threatened by the emerging class of powerful and attractive women and believed surgery would help them keep a grip on their job market share (Cho 2012, n.p.). For men, the ideal standard of appearance focuses on *soft* features bordering on the feminine, such as plump cheeks and rounded eyes. Men frequently elected for nose jobs and jaw contouring to attain the popular *Flower Boy* look associated with youthful, successful men and boys as portrayed in popular music, drama and literature. Although it seems slightly unexpected that men and women aspire toward a similar standard of beauty, my research suggests that perceived positive value association strongly impacts one's decision to have plastic surgery. In other words, one may embody the characteristics of success and happiness through a culturally specific attractive physical

appearance. Such features influence the types of surgery one receives, regardless of gender associations.

As a final emphasis, Korea's plastic surgery industry developed from global factors – namely Japanese colonialism and United States' pseudo-imperialism – and local factors – Joseon-era physiognomic discourse, Park's compressed modernization campaign, and the late 1990s technological boom. While global external factors provided the catalyst for Korea's surgical beginnings, the surgical boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s occurred under highly localized and uniquely Korean conditions when Korea was still fighting to establish a positive reputation in the international arena. The parallel between nation-branding and personal branding remains prevalent as Korea and its citizens show *the other* the enduring attractiveness of its cultural, technological, and economic offerings.

#### *Future Direction of Research*

In the future, I hope to conduct field interviews with patients and doctors from Seoul's prominent plastic surgery clinics, such as the ones whose websites I analyzed in Chapter Three. I feel that while website data provided a preliminary assessment of the marketing and branding of aesthetic surgery, I remain curious as to how an allegedly improved physical appearance specifically translates into increased career opportunities. I hope to cut through the propaganda of pure success stories purveyed on websites and gauge whether plastic surgery has significantly proven to affect the lives of those seeking corporate work within multinational corporations such as Samsung, KIA, and Hyundai. Further, I would explore the effects of a corporation's brand on its hiring process. For instance, do Korean corporations hold employees to certain appearance standards? Can a

facial construction literally represent a brand's values? How many corporate employees have received plastic surgery solely for the purpose of corporate entrance or advancement? Based on my completed research, physical appearance does appear to play a large role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century hiring arena in Korea, but to why and to what degree remains to be seen. Moving away from a matter-of-fact look at (surgically achieved) attractiveness in the workplace would illuminate additional structural factors that have placed much weight on a physically attractive appearance.

## References

- Abelmann, Nancy. 1997a. "Narrating Selfhood and Personality in South Korea: Women and Social Mobility." *American Ethnologist* 24, no. 4: 786-812.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/ae.1997.24.4.786> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1997b. "Women's Class Mobility and Identities in South Korea: A Gendered, Transnational, Narrative Approach." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 2: 398-420.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2646244> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Aston, Sherrell, Douglas Steinbrech, and Jennifer Walden. 2009. "Blepharoplasty in the East Asian Patient." In *Aesthetic Plastic Surgery*. Philadelphia: Saunders.
- Belk, Russell. 2013. "Extended Self in a Digital World." *Journal of Consumer Research* 40, no. 3 (October): 477-500. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/671052> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Bendisch, Franziska, Grechen Larsen, and Myfanwy Trueman. 2007. "Branding People: Towards A Conceptual Framework" *Working Paper Series* 22, no 7: 1-29.  
[http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/management/external/pdf/workingpapers/2007/Booklet\\_07-22.pdf](http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/management/external/pdf/workingpapers/2007/Booklet_07-22.pdf) [accessed April 16, 2014].
- BK Plastic Surgery Hospital. Website. <http://english.bkhospital.com/> [accessed April 17, 2014].
- Blum, Virginia. 2005. "Becoming the Other Woman: The Psychic Drama of Cosmetic Surgery." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 26 no. 2: 104-131.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/fro.2005.0019> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Chang, Kyung-sup, and Min-Young Song. 2010. "The Stranded Individualizer Under Compressed Modernity: South Korean Women in Individualization Without Individualism." *The British Journal of Sociology* 61, no. 3: 539-564.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2010.01325.x> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Chang, Wonsup. 2003. "Hiring and Training in Korean Establishments: Do Employers Substitute Making for Buying?" In *Research in the Sociology of Work*, edited by David B. Bills, 31-48. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Cho, Uhn, and Hagen Koo. 1983. "Economic Development and Women's Work in a Newly Industrializing Country: The Case of Korea." *Development and Change* 14 no. 4: 515-531. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.1983.tb00164.x> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Davies, Gloria, and Gil-soo Han. 2011. "Korean Cosmetic Surgery and Digital Publicity: Beauty by Korean Design." *Media International Australia* 141, no. 11: 146-156.  
<http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=696402596199111;res=IELLCC> [accessed April 16, 2014].

- DiMoia, John Paul. 2013. *Reconstructing Bodies: Biomedicine, Health, and Nation-Building in South Korea Since 1945*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Drogosz, Lisa M., and Paul E. Levy. 1996. "Another Look at the Effects of Appearance, Gender, and Job Type on Performance-Based Decisions." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (September): 437-445. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1996.tb00310.x> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Elfving-Hwang, Joanna. 2013. "Cosmetic Surgery and Embodying the Moral Self in South Korean Popular Makeover Culture." *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 24, no. 2 (June), <http://japanfocus.org/-Joanna-Elfving-Hwang/3956> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Elliott, Anthony. 2008. *Making the Cut: How Cosmetic Surgery Is Transforming Our Lives*. London: Reaktion.
- Eun, Seok-chan. 2013. "Brilliant Hallyu and Plastic Surgery." *Journal of Korean Medical Science* 28, no. 11: 1561-2. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3346/jkms.2013.28.11.1561> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Fan, Ying. 2006. "Branding the Nation: What Is Being Branded?" *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 12, no. 1: 5-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1356766706056633> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Frank, Charles, Kwang-suk Kim, and Larry Westphal. 1975. "Economic Growth in South Korea Since World War II." In *Foreign Trade Regimes and Economic Development: South Korea*, 6-24. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Freeman, C. 2001. "Is Local: Global as Feminine: Masculine? Rethinking the Gender of Globalization." *Signs* 26, no. 4: 1007-1037. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175355> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Frost, Liz. 2003. "Doing Bodies Differently? Gender, Youth, Appearance and Damage." *Journal of Youth Studies* 6, no. 1: 53-70. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1367626032000068163> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Gilman, Sander. 1998. *Creating Beauty to Cure the Soul: Race and Psychology in the Shaping of Aesthetic Surgery*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1999. *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Haiken, Elizabeth. 1997. *Venus Envy: A History of Cosmetic Surgery*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 2000. "The Making of the Modern Face: Cosmetic Surgery." *Social Research* 67, no. 1 (Spring): 81-97.  
<http://proxy.lib.duke.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/docview/209670795?accountid=10598> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Heilman, Madeline E., and Lois R. Saruwatari. 1979. "When Beauty is Beastly: The Effects of Appearance and Sex on Evaluations of Job Applicants for Managerial and Nonmanagerial Jobs." *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 23, no. 3 (June): 360-72. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073\(79\)90003-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(79)90003-5) [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Heilman, Madeline E., and Melanie H. Stopeck. 1985. "Attractiveness and Corporate Success: Different Causal Attributions For Males and Females." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 70, no. 2: 379-88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.70.2.379> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Hoffman, Diane. 1995. "Blurred Genders: The Cultural Construction of Male and Female in South Korea." *Korean Studies* 19: 112-138. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/ks.1995.0019> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Holliday, Ruth, and Joanna Elfving-Hwang. 2012. "Gender, Globalization and Aesthetic Surgery In South Korea." *Body & Society* 18, no. 2 (June): 58-81.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1357034X12440828> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- ID Korea Plastic Surgery Hospital. Website. <http://eng.idhospital.com/> [accessed April 17, 2014].
- Innes, C. L. 1994. "Virgin Territories and Motherlands: Colonial and Nationalist Representations of Africa and Ireland." *Feminist Review* 47: 1-14.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/fr.1994.18> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Jee, Min-joo, and Byeong-il Oh. 2006. "Perpetuation of Female Beauty Stereotypes through Korean Mass Media: Emancipation Or Objectification of Women?" Convention address, annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montreal, Canada, August 10, 2006.
- Jung, Jin-hwa. 2013. "Women in the Corporate World: Who Hires and Promotes Them?" *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 4, no. 5: 40-48.  
[http://ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol\\_4\\_No\\_5\\_May\\_2013/5.pdf](http://ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol_4_No_5_May_2013/5.pdf) [accessed April 16, 2014].
- JW Plastic Surgery Korea. Website. <http://www.jwbeauty.net/eng/index.jsp> [accessed April 17, 2014].



- Karupiah, Premalatha. 2013. "Modification of the Body: A Comparative Analysis of Views of Youths in Penang, Malaysia and Seoul, South Korea." *Journal of Youth Studies* 16, no. 11: 1-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2012.693588> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Kaw, Eugenia. 1993. "Medicalization of Racial Features: Asian American Women and Cosmetic Surgery." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 7 no. 1: 74-89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/649247> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Kelly40Korea. Photograph of monumental statue of Gwan-Sun Yu. <http://kelly40korea.blogspot.com/2012/03/independence-for-korea.html> [accessed April 17, 2013].
- Khedher, Manhel. 2013. "Personal Branding: Towards Conceptualization." *Economics & Strategic Management of Business Process* 2: 7-12. [http://ipco-co.com/BEMM13%20-papers%20-English/ID\\_002.pdf](http://ipco-co.com/BEMM13%20-papers%20-English/ID_002.pdf) [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Kim, Andrew, and Inn-won Park. 2006. Changing Trends of Work in South Korea: The Rapid Growth of Underemployment and Job Insecurity. *Asian Survey* 46, no. 3: 437-456. <http://dx.doi.org/1525/as.2006.46.3.437> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Kim, Nam-hee. 2004. "Career Success Orientation of Korean Women Bank Employees." *Career Development International* 9, no. 6: 595-608. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13620430410559179> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Kim, Su-hyun. "Lookism in the Korean Business World and the Role of Business Management." Bachelor's thesis, University of Arizona, 2012. <http://hdl.handle.net/10150/271618> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Kim, Tae-hong. 1993. "Women's Employment Structure in Korea." *Women's Studies Forum* 9: 112. <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/docview/230455260> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Kim, Taeyon. 2003. "Neo-Confucian Body Techniques: Women's Bodies in Korea's Consumer Society." *Body & Society* 9, no. 1: 97-113. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1357034X030092005> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Kim, Tong-hyung. 2012. "For Korean Women, Glass Ceiling Is More like Concrete." *Korea Times*. [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2012/03/123\\_107320.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2012/03/123_107320.html) [accessed April 17, 2014].
- Kim, Yeon-soo. 2010. "A Content Analysis of the Normalization of Plastic Surgery in the News: A Comparative Study Between Korea and the US." Convention address, annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Suntec City, June 22, 2010.

Korea Herald. Photo of Seoul Summit 2010.

<http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130813000989&mod=skb>  
[accessed April 17, 2014].

KoreaPitangui. YouTube channel for Pitangui Medical and Beauty.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8nJ3xzHsmA> [accessed April 17, 2014].

Lair, Daniel J., Katie Sullivan, and George Cheney. 2005. "Marketization and the Recasting of the Professional Self: The Rhetoric and Ethics of Personal Branding." *Management Communication Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (February 01): 307-43.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0893318904270744> [accessed April 16, 2014].

Lee, Dong-hun. 2010. "Nation Branding Korea." *SERI Quarterly* 3, no. 2: 103-109.

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/docview/218910481> [accessed April 16, 2014].

\_\_\_\_\_. 2011. "Korea's National Brand in 2010." *SERI Quarterly* 4, no. 2: 125-139.

<http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/60071186/koreas-national-brand-2010> [accessed April 16, 2014].

Lee, Joo-hee, and Byung-you Cheon. 2009. "Career Aspirations of Women in Corporate Management: The Case of South Korea." *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 15, no. 3: 60-68.

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/docview/197722284>  
[accessed April 16, 2014].

Lee, Kyeon-hyok. 2010. "Euh Yoon-dae on Nation Branding, Korea's Economy, and Financial Crisis." *SERI Quarterly* 3, no. 2: 70-79.

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/docview/218913777> [accessed April 16, 2014].

Lee, Nam-chul. 2005. "Human Capital Accumulation and Labor Force Participation in Korean Women." *Journal of American Academy of Business* 7, no.2: 63-68.

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/docview/222873421> [accessed April 16, 2014].

Lee, Soo-hyung, and Keunkwan Ryu. 2012. "Plastic Surgery: Investment in Human Capital or Consumption?" *Journal of Human Capital* 6, no. 3 (Fall): 224-50.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/667940> [accessed April 16, 2014].

McClintock, Anne. 1993. "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family." *Feminist Review* 44: 61-80.

[http://english.wisc.edu/amcclintock/writing/Family\\_article.pdf](http://english.wisc.edu/amcclintock/writing/Family_article.pdf)  
[accessed April 16, 2014].

Millard, Ralph. 1955. "Oriental Peregrinations." *Plastic Reconstructive Surgery* 16, no. 5: 319-336.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/13273142> [accessed April 16, 2014].

- Patterson, Louise, and Seong Bae. 2013. "Gender (In)equality in Korean Firms: Results From Stakeholders Interviews." *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communication and Conflict* 17, no. 1: 93-113.  
<http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/abstracts/82207011/gender-in-equality-korean-firms-results-from-stakeholders-interviews> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Pitangui Medical and Beauty. Website. <http://www.pitanguiplasticsurgery.com/> [accessed April 17, 2014].
- Reunes, Gertjan. 2013. "Branding Yourself: a Necessity? An Analysis of the Perceptions of Young Professionals Towards the Concept of Personal Branding." Bachelor's thesis, Universiteit Gent. [http://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/060/512/RUG01-002060512\\_2013\\_0001\\_AC.pdf](http://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/060/512/RUG01-002060512_2013_0001_AC.pdf) [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Riggs, Lauren. 2012. "The Globalization of Cosmetic Surgery: Examining BRIC and Beyond." Master's thesis, University of San Francisco.  
<http://repository.usfca.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1037&context=thes> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Scheiber, Capt. F. L., U.S. Army. Photograph of Seoul, November 1, 1950.  
<http://www.shmoop.com/korean-war/photo-rubble-seoul.html> [accessed April 17, 2014].
- Seoul Touchup. Website. <http://www.seoultouchup.com/plastic-surgery-in-korea/> [accessed April 17, 2014].
- Sepúlveda, Ana, and Maria Calado. 2012. "Westernization: The role of Mass Media on Body Image and Eating Disorders" In *Relevant Topics in Eating Disorders*, edited by Juan Jauregui-Lobera, 47-64. Croatia: InTech.
- Siegel, Jordan, Lynn Pyun, and B.Y. Cheon. 2104. "Multinational Firms, Labor Market Discrimination, and the Capture of Competitive Advantage by Exploiting the Social Divide." Working paper presented at Harvard Business School, Cambridge, February 10, 2014.
- Suissa, Amnon Jacob. 2008. "Addiction to Cosmetic Surgery: Representations and Medicalization of the Body." *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction* 6, no. 4 (October): 619-30. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11469-008-9164-2> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Sunindyo, Saraswati. 1998. "When the Earth is Female and the Nation is Mother: Gender, the Armed Forces and Nationalism in Indonesia." *Feminist Review* 58: 1-21.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/014177898339569> [accessed April 16, 2014].

- Swami, Viren, Choon-Sup Hwang, and Jaehee Jung. 2012. "Factor Structure and Correlates of the Acceptance of Cosmetic Surgery Scale Among South Korean University Students." *Aesthetic Surgery Journal* 32, no. 2 (February 01): 220-229. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1090820X11431577> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Synnott, Anthony. 1993. *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self, and Society*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Twine, Richard. 2002. "Physiognomy, Phrenology and the Temporality of the Body." *Body & Society* 8, no.1 (March 01): 67-88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1357034X02008001004> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- VIP International Plastic Surgery Center. Website. <http://www.beauty-korea.com/> [accessed April 17, 2014].
- VIPKoreana. YouTube channel for VIP International Plastic Surgery Center. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmGxsk5Ejbo> [accessed April 17, 2014].
- Wee, Lionel, and Ann Brooks. 2010. "Personal Branding and the Commodification of Reflexivity." *Cultural Sociology* 4, no. 1 (March 01): 45-62. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1749975509356754> [accessed April 16, 2014].
- Wegenstein, Bernadette. 2006. *Getting Under the Skin: Body and Media Theory*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2012. *The Cosmetic Gaze: Body Modification and the Construction of Beauty*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Wolf, Naomi. 1990. *The Beauty Myth*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Wonjin Aesthetic Surgery Clinic. Website. <http://www.wonjinbeauty.com/index.asp> [accessed April 17, 2014].
- World Economic Forum. 2012. "The Global Gender Gap Report 2012." <http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2012> [accessed October 19, 2013].
- Yi, I-hwa. 2006. *Korea's Pastimes and Customs: A Social History*. Paramus: Homa Sekey Books.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. 1985. "Front and Rear: The Sexual Division of Labor in the Israeli Army." *Feminist Studies* 11, no. 3: 649-675. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.0499697.0011.313> [accessed April 16, 2014].

Ziegler, Joseph. 2007. "Philosophers and Physicians on the Scientific Validity of Latin Physiognomy, 1200-1500." *Early Science and Medicine* 12, no. 3: 285-312.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20617678> [accessed April 16, 2014].

Zimmerman, Neetzan. 2013. "Plastic Surgery Blamed for Making All Miss Korea Contestants Look Alike." Gawker.com. <http://gawker.com/plastic-surgery-blamed-for-making-all-miss-korea-contes-480907455> [accessed April 16, 2014].